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SCANDINAVIAN MONOGRAPHS

VOLUME III

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THE KING'S MIRROR



ESTABLISHED BY NIELS POULSON

THE KING'S MIRROR
(SPECULUM REGALE—KONUNGS SKUGGSJÁ)

TRANSLATED FROM THE OLD NORWEGIAN

BY

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NEW YORK
THE AMERICAN-SCANDINAVIAN FOUNDATION
LONDON: HUMPHREY MILFORD
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

1917
MBE

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PRINTED AT THE HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, U.S.A.

TO MY FATHER AND TO THE
MEMORY OF MY MOTHER

FOREWORD

AMONG the many arguments that have recently been advanced in support of imperialistic ambitions and statesmanship, there is one that justifies and demands aggression in the interest of human culture. According to this rather plausible political philosophy, it is the destiny of the smaller states to be absorbed into the larger and stronger. The application is not to be limited to the so-called "backward races"; it is also extended to the lesser peoples of Europe. These have, it is held, no real right to an independent existence; only the great, the powerful, and the mighty can claim this privilege, for they alone are able to render the higher forms of service to civilization.

To this theory the history of the Scandinavian lands provides a complete and striking refutation. In the drama of European development the Northern countries have played important and honorable parts; but except for a brilliant period in Swedish history (chiefly during the seventeenth century) they have never weighed heavily in the Continental balance. Their geographical situation is unfavorable and their economic resources have never been comparable to those of the more prominent states beyond the Baltic and the North Sea. But when

we come to the kingdom of intellect the story is a totally different one. The literary annals of Europe in the nineteenth century give prominence to a series of notable Scandinavian writers who not only achieved recognition in their own lands but found a place in the competition for leadership in the world at large. The productivity of the Northern mind is not of recent origin, however; the literatures of Scandinavia have a history that leads back into the days of heathen worship more than a thousand years ago.

Perhaps the most effective illustration of what a fruitful intellect can accomplish even when placed in the most unpromising environment is medieval Iceland. Along the western and southwestern coasts of the island lay a straggling settlement of Norwegian immigrants whose lives were spent chiefly in a struggle to force the merest subsistence from a niggardly soil. And yet, in the later middle ages and even earlier, there was a literary activity on these Arctic shores which, in output as well as in quality, compares favorably with that of any part of contemporary Europe. Evidently intellectual greatness bears but slight relation to economic advantages or political power. What was true of Iceland was also true of Norway, though in a lesser degree. In that country, too, life was in great measure a continuous struggle with the soil and the sea. Still, even in that land and age, the spirits

were active, the arts flourished, and the North added her contribution to the treasures of European culture.

The poems and tales of those virile days, the eddas and sagas, are too familiar to need more than a mention in this connection. But the fact is not so commonly known that the medieval Northmen were thinkers and students as well as poets and romancers. They, too, were interested in the mysteries of the universe, in the problems of science, and in the intricate questions of social relationships. In their thinking on these matters they showed more intellectual independence and less slavish regard for venerable authority than was usually the case among medieval writers. And of all the men who in that age of faith tried to analyse and set in order their ideas of the world in which they moved, perhaps none drew more largely on his own spiritual resources than the unknown author of the *King's Mirror*.

Unlike the sagas and related writings, the purpose of the *King's Mirror* is utilitarian and didactic. The author has before him a group of serious and important problems, which he proceeds to discuss for the instruction of his readers. Consequently, certain qualities of style that are often associated with Old Norse literature are not apparent in his work to any marked degree. In his effort to make his language clear, definite, and intelligible, the

author sometimes finds it necessary to repeat and restate his ideas, with the result that his literary style is frequently stiff, labored, and pedantic. These defects are, however, not characteristic of the book as a whole. Many of its chapters display rare workmanship and prove that the author of the *King's Mirror* is one of the great masters of Old Norse prose.

In preparing the translation of this unique work, my aim has been to reproduce the author's thought as faithfully as possible and to state it in such a form as to satisfy the laws of English syntax. But I have also felt that, so far as it can be done, the flavor of the original should be retained and that a translator, in his effort to satisfy certain conventional demands of modern composition, should not deviate too far from the path of mental habit that the author has beaten in his roamings through the fields of thought. Peculiarities of style and expression, can, it is true, usually not be reproduced in another language; at the same time it is possible to ignore these considerations to such an extent that the product becomes a paraphrase rather than a translation; and I have believed that such a rendition should be avoided, even at the risk of erring on the side of literalness.

The importance of the *King's Mirror* as a source of information in the study of medieval thought was first brought to my attention by Professor

Julius E. Olson of the University of Wisconsin, who has also, since the work of preparing this edition was begun, followed its progress with helpful interest. Professors G. T. Flom and A. H. Lybyer of the University of Illinois, and Professor W. H. Schofield of Harvard University, have read the manuscript in whole or part and have contributed many valuable suggestions. My wife, Lillian May Larson, has assisted in a great variety of ways, as in all my work. Dr. H. G. Leach of the American-Scandinavian Foundation has read the proof sheets of the entire volume and has suggested many improvements in the text. To all these persons I wish to express my thanks. I am also deeply indebted to the trustees of the American-Scandinavian Foundation whose generosity has made it possible to publish the work at this time.

L. M. L.

*University of Illinois,
August, 1917.*

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THE KING'S MIRROR

INTRODUCTION

THE place of the thirteenth century in the history of human achievement is a subject upon which scholars have not yet come to a general agreement. There can be no doubt that it was, on the whole, an age of progress in many fields; but there is much in its history that points to stagnation, if not to actual decline. From a superficial study of its annals one might be led to class it with the lesser centuries; most writers are inclined to rank it lower than the fourteenth century, and perhaps not even so high as the twelfth. It was in this period that the crusading movement finally flickered out and the Christian world was compelled to leave the cradle of the holy faith in the hands of the infidel. In the thirteenth century, too, the medieval empire sank into hopeless inefficiency and all but expired. The papacy, which more than any other power was responsible for the ruin of the imperial ambitions, also went into decline. Whether the loss in authority and prestige on the part of the holy see was compensated by a renewed spiritual energy in the church at large may well be doubted: what evidence we have would indicate that the religion of the masses was gross and materialistic, that ethical standards were low, and that the improvement in clerical morals, which the church had hoped would follow the enforcement of celibacy, had failed to appear.

Yet the thirteenth century also had its attractive figures and its important movements. The old social order was indeed crumbling, but in its place appeared two new forces which were to inherit the power and opportunities of feudalism and reshape social life: these were the new monarchy, enjoying wide sovereign powers, and the new national consciousness, which was able to think in larger units. In England the century saw the development of a new representative institution, which has become the mother of modern legislative assemblies. The Italian cities were growing rich from the profits of Oriental trade; in the Flemish towns the weaver's industry was building up new forms of municipal life; the great German Hansa was laying hold on the commerce of the northern seas. In the realms of higher intellect, in science, philosophy, and theology, the age was a notable one, with Roger Bacon, Albertus Magnus, and Thomas Aquinas as the leaders, each in his field. The century also meant much for the progress of geographical knowledge, for it was in this period that Marco Polo penetrated the mysterious lands of the Far East.

As the historian looks back into this age, he is, therefore, able to find broad traces of much that is regarded as fundamental to modern life. Of first importance in this regard is the employment of popular idioms in literary productions. French literature saw its beginnings in the eleventh century with the *chansons de geste*, songs of valorous deeds from the heroic age of the Frankish kingdom. In the next century the poets began to use the themes of the Arthurian legends and sang the exploits of the famous British king and the knights of his Round

Table. A little later came another cycle of poems based on the heroic tales of classical antiquity. The twelfth century witnessed a parallel movement in Germany, which at first was largely an imitation of contemporary French poetry. The poets, however, soon discovered literary treasures in the dim world of the Teutonic past, in the tales of the Nibelungs, in the heroic deeds of Theodoric, and in the exploits of other heroes.

Thus in the first half of the thirteenth century there was a large body of French and German verse in circulation. The verses were borne from region to region and from land to land by professional entertainers, who chanted the poems, and by pilgrims and other travelers, who secured manuscript copies. In the course of time the new tales reached the Northern countries, and it was not long before the Northmen were eagerly listening to the stories of chivalrous warfare, militant religion, and tragic love, that they had learned in the southlands.

The Northern peoples thus had a share in the fruitage of the later middle ages; but they also had a share in their achievements. Politically as well as intellectually the thirteenth century was a great age in the Scandinavian countries. The Danish kingdom rose to the highest point of its power under Valdemar the Victorious, whose troubled reign began in 1202. Valdemar succeeded in extending the territories of Denmark along the entire southern coast of the Baltic Sea; but the greatness was short-lived: after the defeat of the Danes by the North Germans at Børnhoved in 1227, the decline of Danish imperialism began. In Sweden, too, men dreamed of conquest beyond the sea. Under the leadership of Earl

Birger, the most eminent statesman of medieval Sweden, Swedish power was steadily extended into Finnish territory, and the foundations of Sweden as a great European power was being laid.

During the days of Valdemar and the great Birger Norway also reached its greatest territorial extent. After a century of factional warfare, the nation settled down to comparative peace. All the Norwegian colonies except those in Ireland, were definitely made subject to the Norwegian crown: these were the Isle of Man, the Hebrides, the Orkneys, the Shetlands, the Faroes, Iceland, and Greenland. In every field of national life there was vigor and enterprise. And on the throne sat a strong, wise, and learned monarch, Hakon IV, the ruler with the "great king-thought."

The real greatness of the thirteenth century in the North lies, however, in the literary achievements of the age. It is not known when the Old Norse poets first began to exercise their craft, but the earliest poems that have come down to us date from the ninth century. For two hundred years the literary production was in the form of alliterative verse; but after 1050 there came a time when scaldic poetry did not seem to thrive. This does not mean that the interest in literature died out; it merely took a new form: the age of poetry was followed by an age of prose. With the Christian faith came the Latin alphabet and writing materials, and there was no longer any need to memorize verse. The new form was the saga, which began to appear in the twelfth century and received many notable additions in the thirteenth. The literary movement on the continent,

therefore, had its counterpart in the North; only here the writings took the form of prose, while there literature was chiefly in verse.

These two currents came into contact in the first half of the thirteenth century, when the men and women of the North began to take an interest in the Arthurian romances and other tales that had found their way into Norway. In this new form of Norwegian literature there could not be much originality; still its appearance testifies to a widening of the intellectual horizon. In addition to sagas and romances the period was also productive of written laws, homilies, legends, Biblical narratives, histories, and various other forms of literature. It is to be noted that virtually everything was written in the idiom of the common people. Latin was used to some extent in the North in the later middle ages, but it never came into such general use there as in other parts of Europe. In the thirteenth century it had almost passed out of use as a literary language.

In our interest in tales and romances we must not overlook the fact that the thirteenth century also produced an important literature of the didactic type. For centuries the Christian world had studied the encyclopedic works of Capella, Cassiodorus, and Isidore, or had read the writings of Bede and his many followers who had composed treatises "on the nature of things," in which they had striven to set in order the known or supposed facts of the physical world. The thirteenth century had an encyclopedist of its own in Vincent of Beauvais, who produced a vast compendium made up of several *Specula*, which were supposed to contain all

the knowledge that the world possessed in science, history, theology, and other fields of learning. The age also produced various other Latin works of the didactic sort, of which the *Historia Scholastica* of Petrus Comestor was perhaps the most significant for the intellectual history of the North.

Norway had no encyclopedist, but the thirteenth century produced a Norwegian writer who undertook a task which was somewhat of the encyclopedic type. Some time during the reign of Hakon IV, perhaps while Vincent was composing his great *Speculum Majus*, a learned Norseman wrote the *Speculum Regale*, or *King's Mirror*, a work which a competent critic has characterized as "one of the chief ornaments of Old Norse literature." * Unlike the sagas and the romances, which have in view chiefly the entertainment of the reader, the *King's Mirror* is didactic throughout; in a few chapters only does the author depart from his serious purpose, and all but two of these are of distinct value. The purpose of the work is to provide a certain kind of knowledge which will be of use to young men who are looking forward to a career in the higher professions.

As outlined in the introductory chapter, the work was to deal with the four great orders of men in the Norwegian kingdom: the merchants and their interests; the king and his retainers; the church and the clergy; and the peasantry or husbandmen. In the form in which the *King's Mirror* has come down to modern times, however, the first two divisions only are included; not the least fragment of any separate discussion of the clerical

* R. Keyser in the introduction to the Christiania edition (p. xi).

profession or of the agricultural classes has been found. It is, therefore, generally believed that the work was not completed beyond the point where the extant manuscripts close. Why the book was left unfinished cannot be known; but it is a plausible conjecture that illness or perhaps death prevented the author, who was apparently an aged man, from completing the task that he had set before him. It is also possible that the ideas expressed in the closing chapters of the work, especially in the last chapter, which deals with the subject of clerical subordination to the secular powers, were so repugnant to the ecclesiastical thought of the time that the authorities of the church discouraged or perhaps found means to prevent the continuation of the work into the third division, where the author had planned to deal with the church and the clergy.

In form the *Speculum* is a dialog between a wise and learned father and his son, in which the larger part of the discussion naturally falls to the former. The son asks questions and suggests problems, which the father promptly answers or solves. In the choice of form there is nothing original: the dialog was frequently used by didactic writers in the middle ages, and it was the natural form to adopt. The title, *Speculum Regale*, is also of a kind that was common in those days.* *Specula* of many sorts were being produced: *Speculum Ecclesiae*, *Speculum Stultorum*, *Speculum Naturale*, and *Speculum Perfectionis* are some of the titles used for writings of a

* It is believed that the title came into use in Europe in imitation of Hindu writers who wrote "Mirrors of Princes." Nansen, *In Northern Mists*, II, 242.

didactic type. The German *Sachsenspiegel* is an instance of the title employed for a work in a vulgar idiom. There was also a *Speculum Regum*, or *Mirror of Kings*, and a century later an English ecclesiastic wrote a *Speculum Regis*, but the writer knows of no other work called the *Speculum Regale*.

It is an interesting question whether the *King's Mirror* was inspired by any earlier work written along similar lines. Originality was a rare virtue in the middle ages, and the good churchmen who wrote books in those days cannot have regarded plagiarism as a mortal sin. The great writers were freely copied by the lesser men, thoughts, titles, statements, and even the wording being often taken outright. It is, therefore, difficult to determine the sources of statements found in the later works, as they may have been drawn from any one of a whole series of writings on the subject under discussion. The writer has not been able to make an exhaustive examination of all the didactic and devotional literature of the centuries preceding the thirteenth, but the search that has been made has not proved fruitful. There is every reason to believe that the author of the *King's Mirror* was an independent thinker and writer. He was doubtless acquainted with a large number of books and had drawn information from a great variety of sources; but when the writing was actually done he had apparently a few volumes only at his disposal. In the region where the work seems to have been composed, on the northern edge of European civilization, there was neither cathedral nor monastery nor any other important ecclesiastical foundation where a collection of books might be

found.* It is likely, therefore, that the author had access to such books only as were in his own possession. But he came to his task with a well-stocked mind, with a vast fund of information gathered by travel and from the experiences of an active life; and thus he drew largely from materials that had become the permanent possession of his memory. This fact, if it be a fact, will also help to explain why so many inaccuracies have crept into his quoted passages; in but very few instances does he give the correct wording of a citation.

There can be no doubt that the author had a copy of the *Vulgate* before him; at least one Biblical passage is correctly given, and it is quoted in its Latin form.† It has also been discovered that he had access to an Old Norse paraphrase of a part of the Old Testament, the books of Samuel and of the Kings.‡ It is likely that he was also acquainted with some of the works of Saint Augustine, and perhaps with the writings of certain other medieval authorities. Among these it seems safe to include the *Disciplina Clericalis*, a collection of tales and ethical observations by Petrus Alfonsus, a converted Jew who wrote in the first half of the twelfth century. The *Disciplina* is a somewhat fantastic production wholly unlike the sober pages of the *Speculum Regale*; nevertheless, the two works appear to show certain

* There must have been important collections of manuscripts at Nidaros (Trondhjem), where there was a cathedral and several monastic institutions. The *King's Mirror* was probably composed in Namdalen, about one hundred miles northeast of Nidaros. See below, pp. 59-60.

† See below, p. 237.

‡ Storm, "Om Tidsforholdet mellem Kongespeilet og Stjórn samt Barlaams Saga": *Arkiv for nordisk Filologi*, III, 83-88.

points of resemblance which can hardly have been accidental. The *Disciplina* is a dialog and the part of the son is much the same as in the *King's Mirror*. In both works the young man expresses a desire to become acquainted with the customs of the royal court, inasmuch as he may some day decide to apply for admission to the king's household service.* The description of courtly manners and customs in the earlier dialog, though much briefer than the corresponding discussion in the Norwegian treatise, has some resemblance to the latter which suggests a possible relationship between the two works.

The Norwegian author may also have used some of the many commentaries on the books of Holy Writ, in the production of which the medieval cloisters were so prolific. Of the influence of Petrus Comestor's *Historia Scholastica* the writer has found no distinct trace in the *King's Mirror*; but one can be quite sure that he knew and had used the *Elucidarium* of Honorius of Autun. The *Elucidarium* is a manual of medieval theology which was widely read in the later middle ages and was translated into Old Norse, probably before the *King's Mirror* was written.† But our Norwegian author was not a slavish follower of earlier authorities: in his use and treatment of materials drawn from the Scriptures he shows remarkable independence. Remarkable at least is his ability to make Biblical narratives serve to

* See *Disciplina Clericalis*, fabula xxiv: Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, CLVII, 698-700.

† A fragment of the *Elucidarium*, comprising, however, the greater part of the work, is published in *Annaler for nordisk Oldkyndighed*, 1852 and 1853; in the former volume a Danish translation is given; the latter contains the Icelandic text.

illustrate his own theories of Norwegian kingship. He was acquainted with some of the legends that circulated through the church and made effective use of them. He must also have known a work on the marvels of Ireland * and the letter of Prester John to the Byzantine emperor,† in which that mythical priest-king recounts the wonders of India. But the chief source of his work is a long life full of action, conflict, thought, and experience.

The importance of the *King's Mirror* lies in the insight that it gives into the state of culture and civilization of the North in the later middle ages. The interest follows seven different lines: physical science, especially such matters as are of importance to navigators; geography, particularly the geography of the Arctic lands and waters; the organization of the king's household and the privileges and duties of the king's henchmen; military engines, weapons, and armour used in offensive and defensive warfare; ethical ideas, especially rules of conduct for courtiers and merchants; the royal office, the duties of the king and the divine origin of kingship; and the place of the church in the Norwegian state.

In one of his earlier chapters the author enumerates the chief subjects of a scientific character that ought to be studied by every one who wishes to become a successful merchant. These are the great luminaries of the sky, the motions and the paths of the heavenly bodies, the divisions of time and the changes that bring the seasons, the cardinal points of the compass, and the

* See below, pp. 22-25.

† See below, p. 101 (c. viii).

tides and currents of the ocean.* In discussing these matters he is naturally led to a statement as to the shape of the earth. All through the middle ages there were thinkers who accepted the teachings of the classical astronomers who had taught that the earth is round like a sphere; but this belief was by no means general. Bede for one appears to have been convinced that the earth is of a spherical shape, though he explains that, because of mountains which rise high above the surface, it cannot be perfectly round.† Alexander Neckam, an English scientist who wrote two generations before the *King's Mirror* was composed, states in his *Praise of Divine Wisdom* that "the ancients have ventured to believe that the earth is round, though mountains rise high above its surface."‡ Neckam's own ideas on this point are quite confused and he remains discreetly non-committal.

But if the earth is a globe, there is every reason to believe in the existence of antipodes; and if there are antipodes, all cannot behold Christ coming in the clouds on the final day. To the medieval theologians, at least to the larger number of them, this argument disposed effectually of the Ptolemaic theory. Job does indeed say that God "hangeth the earth upon nothing," § and this passage might point to a spherical form; but then the Psalmist affirms that He "stretched out the earth above the waters," || and this statement would indicate

* C. iv. See also Larson, "Scientific Knowledge in the North in the Thirteenth Century": *Publications of the Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Study*, I, 139-146.

† *De Natura Rerum*, c. xlvi: Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, XC, 264-265.

‡ *De Naturis Rerum*, 441. § *Job*, xxvi, 7. || *Psalms*, cxxxvi, 6.

that the inhabited part of the earth is an island floating upon the waters of the great Ocean, by which it is also surrounded. This belief was generally maintained in the earlier centuries of the classical world, and it had wide acceptance in the middle ages. There were also those who held that beyond and around the outer Ocean is a great girdle of fire. It is likely, however, that many believed with Isidore of Seville that it is useless to speculate on subjects of this sort. "Whether it [the earth] is supported by the density of the air, or whether it is spread out upon the waters . . . or how the yielding air can support such a vast mass as the earth, whether such an immense weight can be upheld by the waters without being submerged, or how the earth maintains its balance . . . these matters it is not permitted any mortal to know and they are not for us to discuss." *

There can be no doubt that the author of the *King's Mirror* believed in the Ptolemaic theory of a spherical earth. In speaking of our planet he uses the term *jarðarbolllr*, † earth-sphere. In an effort to explain why some countries are hotter than others, he suggests an experiment with an apple. It is not clear how this can shed much light on the problem, but the author boldly states the point to be illustrated: "From this you may infer that the earth-circle is round like a ball." ‡

Toward the close of the medieval period there were certain thinkers who attempted to reconcile the spherical theory with the belief that the inhabited part of the earth is an island. These appear to have believed that

* *De Natura Rerum Liber*, c. xlv: Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, LXXXIII, 1015.

† See c. xix.

‡ See c. vii.

the earth is a globe partly submerged in a larger sphere composed of water.* The visible parts of the earth would rise above the surrounding ocean like a huge island, and the Biblical passages which had caused so much difficulty could thus be interpreted in accord with apparent facts. It is quite clear that the author of the *King's Mirror* held no such theory. In a poetic description of how the eight winds form their covenants of friendship at the approach of spring, he tells us that "at midnight the north wind goes forth to meet the coursing sun and leads him through rocky deserts toward the sparse-built shores."† The author, therefore, seems to believe that the earth is a sphere, that there are lands on the opposite side of the earth, and that these lands are inhabited. He also understands that the regions that lie beneath the midnight course of the sun in spring and summer must be thinly populated, as the sun's path on the opposite side of the earth during the season of lengthening days is constantly approaching nearer the pole.

But while the author seems to accept the Ptolemaic theory of the universe, he is not able to divest his mind entirely of current geographical notions. There can be no doubt that he believed in the encircling outer ocean, and it is barely possible that he also looked with favor on the belief that the whole was encompassed by a girdle of fire. On this point, however, we cannot be sure: he mentions the belief merely as one that is current, not as one accepted by himself.‡

* Ruge, *Geschichte des Zeitalters der Entdeckungen*, 97.

† C. v.

‡ C. xix.

It was commonly held in the middle ages that the earth is divided into five zones, only two of which may be inhabited. This was a theory advanced by a Greek scientist in the fifth century before our era,* and was given currency in medieval times chiefly, perhaps, through the works of Macrobius.† At first these zones were conceived as belts drawn across the heavens; later they came to be considered as divisions of the earth's surface. It will be noted that our author uses the older terminology and speaks of the zones as belts on the heaven; ‡ it may be inferred, therefore, that he derived his information from one of the earlier Latin treatises on the nature of the universe.§ For two thousand years it was believed that human life could not exist in the polar and torrid zones. Even as late as the fifteenth century European navigators had great fear of travel into the torrid zone, where the heat was thought to grow more intense as one traveled south, until a point might be reached where water in the sea would boil. The author of the *King's Mirror* seems to doubt all this. He regards the polar zones as generally uninhabitable; still, he is sure that Greenland lies within the arctic zone; and yet, Greenland “has beautiful sunshine and is said to have a rather pleasant climate.” || He sees quite clearly that the physical nature of a country may have much to do with climatic conditions. The cold of Iceland he ascribes in great part to its position near

* Parmenides of Elea (ca. 480 B.C.). Nansen, *In Northern Mists*, I, 12.

† See below, p. 147 (c. xix). Cf. *Ibid.*, 123.

‡ C. xix.

§ Probably from the writings of Isidore, who speaks of the zones as belts on the heavens. *Etymologiae*, iii, c. xlv; xiii, c. vi; *De Natura Rerum*, c. x.

|| C. xix.

Greenland: "for it is to be expected that severe cold would come thence, since Greenland is ice-clad beyond all other lands." * He conceives the possibility that the south temperate zone is inhabited. "And if people live as near the cold belt on the southern side as the Greenlanders do on the northern, I firmly believe that the north wind blows as warm to them as the south wind to us. For they must look north to see the midday and the sun's whole course, just as we, who dwell north of the sun, must look to the south." †

On the questions of time and its divisions the author of the *King's Mirror* seems to have had nearly all the information that the age possessed. He divides the period of day and night into two "days" (*dægr*) of twelve hours each. Each hour is again divided into smaller hours called *ostenta* in Latin.‡ Any division below the minute he apparently does not know. The length of the year he fixes at 365 days and six hours, every fourth year these additional hours make twenty-four and we have leap year.§ The waxing and waning of the moon and the tidal changes in the ocean are also reckoned with fair accuracy.||

Medieval scientists found these movements in the ocean a great mystery. Some ascribed the tides to the influence of the moon; ¶ others believed that they were caused by the collision of the waters of two arms of the ocean, an eastern arm and a western; still others

* C. xiii.

† C. xxi.

‡ C. vi.

§ *Ibid.*

|| *Ibid.*

¶ The Venerable Bede held that the moon is in some way responsible for the tides. *De Natura Rerum*, c. xxxix: Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, XC, 258-259; see also *ibid.*, XC, 422-426 (*De Tempore Ratione*, c. xxix).

imagined that somewhere there were "certain cavern-like abysses, which now swallow up the water, and now spew it forth again."* The author of the *Speculum* has no doubts on the subject: he believes that the tides are due to the waxing and waning of the moon.†

In his discussion of the volcanic fires of Iceland he shows that on this subject he was completely under the influence of medieval conceptions. He has heard that Gregory the Great believed that the volcanic eruptions in Sicily have their origins in the infernal regions. Our author is inclined to question, however, that there is anything supernatural about the eruptions of Mount Etna; but he is quite sure that the volcanic fires of Iceland rise from the places of pain. The fires of Sicily are living fires, inasmuch as they devour living materials, such as wood and earth; those of Iceland, on the other hand, consume nothing living but only dead matter like rock. And he therefore concludes that these fires must have their origin in the realms of death.‡

The author has a suspicion that earthquakes may be due to volcanic action, but he offers another explanation, though he does not give it as his own belief. Down in the bowels of the earth there is probably a large number of caverns and empty passages. "At times it may happen that these passages and cavities will be so completely packed with air either by the winds or by the power of the roaring breakers, that the pressure of the blast cannot be confined, and this may be the origin of those great earthquakes that occur in that country." §

* Alexander Neckam, *De Naturis Rerum*, 138.

† C. vi.

‡ C. xiii.

§ *Ibid.*

In this theory there is nothing new or original: the belief that the earth is of a spongy constitution and that earthquakes are caused by air currents is a very old one, which can be followed back through the writings of Alexander Neckam,* the Venerable Bede,† and others, at least as far as to Isidore.‡ The elder Pliny, who wrote his *Natural History* in the first century of the Christian era, seems to have held similar views: "I believe there can be no doubt that the winds are the cause of earthquakes."§

The chapters that deal with the northern lights are interesting because they seem to imply that these lights were not visible in those parts of Norway where the *King's Mirror* was written. The editors of the Christiania edition of this work call attention to the fact that there have been periods when these phenomena were less prominent, and suggest that there may have been such a period in the thirteenth century.|| The author discusses these lights as one of the wonders of Greenland, and the natural inference is that they were not known in Norway. But it is also true that he speaks of whales as if they were limited to the seas about Iceland and Greenland, which is manifestly incorrect. It is likely that the author merely wishes to emphasize the fact that the northern lights appear with greater frequency and in greater brilliance in Greenland than any-

* *De Naturis Rerum*, 158.

† *De Natura Rerum*, c. xlix: Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, XC, 275-276.

‡ *De Natura Rerum*, c. xlvi: Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, LXXXIII, 1015. See also *The Christian Topography* of Cosmas (written about 547), 17-18; Cosmas scoffs at the theory.

§ *Naturalis Historiae*, I, 201 (ii, c. lxxix).

|| P. ix, note.

where in Norway. He gives three theories to account for these phenomena: some ascribe them to a girdle of fire which encircles the earth beyond the outer ocean; others hold that the lights are merely rays of the sun which find their way past the edges of the earth while the sun is coursing underneath; but his own belief is that frost and cold have attained to such a power in the Arctic that they are able to put forth light.* In his opinion cold is a positive force as much as heat or any other form of energy. To the men of the author's time there was nothing strange in this belief: it seems to have been held by many even before the thirteenth century that ice could under certain conditions produce heat and even burn.†

Among the author's scientific notions very little that is really original can be found. It is Riant's belief that he drew to some extent from Oriental sources, the lore of the East having come into the North as the spoil of crusaders or as the acquisitions of Norwegian pilgrims.‡ It may be doubted, however, whether the Saracenic contribution is a real one: almost everything that the author of the *Speculum Regale* presents as his belief can be found in the Latin scientific manuals of the middle ages. He alludes to the writings of Isidore of Seville, and

* C. xix.

† Thus Solinus (pp. xxxiv, xxxvii, 236) says "the sea-ice on this island ignites itself on collision, and when it is ignited it burns like wood." See Nansen, *In Northern Mists*, I, 193. Adam von Bremen (*Gesta Hammaburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificum*, iv, 34) writes: "they report this remarkable thing about it that this ice appears so black and dry that, on account of its age, it burns when it is kindled." *Ibid.* The same belief appears in a German poem *Meregarto*: "Thereby the ice there becomes so hard as crystal, that they make a fire above it till the crystal glows." *Ibid.*, I, 181.

‡ Riant, *Expéditions et Pèlerinages des Scandinaves en Terre Sainte*, 440-441.

there can be little doubt that he was acquainted with the ideas of the great Spaniard, though he does not accept them all. His ideas as to the shape of the earth and the probable causes of earthquakes may have been derived from the writings of the Venerable Bede, or from one of his numerous followers. The divisions of time are discussed in many of the scientific treatises of the middle ages, but the division of the hour into sixtieths called *ostenta* is probably not found in any manual written before the ninth century; so far as the writer has been able to determine, *ostenta*, meaning minutes, first appears in the works of Rabanus Maurus.*

The discussion of these scientific notions has its chief value in showing to what extent the Norwegians of the thirteenth century were acquainted with the best theories of the age as to the great facts of the universe. The author's own contribution to the scientific learning of his time lies almost exclusively in the field of geography. "Beyond comparison the most important geographical writer of the medieval North," says Dr. Nansen, "and at the same time one of the first in the whole of medieval Europe, was the unknown author who wrote the King's Mirror. . . . If one turns from contemporary or earlier European geographical literature, with all its superstition and obscurity, to this masterly work, the difference is very striking."† This is doubtless due to the fact that our author was not a cloistered monk who was content to copy the ideas and expressions of his predecessors with such changes as would satisfy a theological mind, but a

* Rabanus Maurus died in 856.

† Nansen, *In Northern Mists*, II, 242.

man who had been active in the secular world and was anxious to get at real facts.

Among the chapters devoted to scientific lore the author has introduced several which are ostensibly intended to serve the purpose of entertainment; the author seems to fear that the interest of his readers is likely to flag, if the dry recital of physical facts is continued unbroken. It is in these chapters, which profess to deal with the marvels of Norway, Ireland, Iceland, Greenland, and the Arctic seas, that he introduces his geographical data. In the description of Greenland are included such important and practical subjects as the general character of the land, the great ice fields, the products of the country, wild animals, and a few facts from the economic life of the people. In the chapters on Iceland the author limits himself to certain physical features, such as glaciers, geysers, mineral springs, volcanoes, and earthquakes. He also gives a "description of the animal world of the northern seas to which there is no parallel in the earlier literature of the world."* He enumerates twenty-one different species of whales† and describes several of them with some fulness. He mentions and describes six varieties of seals‡ and also gives a description of the walrus. The marvelous element is represented by detailed accounts of the "sea-hedges" (probably sea quakes) on the coasts of Greenland, the

* Nansen, *In Northern Mists*, II, 243.

† *Ibid.* "If we make allowance for three of them being probably sharks and for two being perhaps alternative names for the same whale, the total corresponds to the number of species that are known in northern waters."

‡ *Ibid.* This "corresponds to the number of species living on the coasts of Norway and Greenland."

merman, the mermaid, and the kraken.* But on the whole these chapters give evidence of careful, discriminating observation and a desire to give accurate knowledge.

For all but the two chapters on Ireland the sources of the author's geographical information are evidently the tales of travelers and his own personal experiences; of literary sources there is no trace. The account of the marvels of Ireland, however, gives rise to certain problems. It may be that the Norwegian geographer based these chapters on literary sources that are still extant, or he may have had access to writings which have since disappeared. It is also possible that some of the information was contributed by travelers who sailed the western seas and had sojourned on the "western isles;" for it must be remembered that Norway still had colonies as far south as the Isle of Man, and that Norsemen were still living in Ireland, though under English rule. When Hakon IV made his expedition into these regions in 1263, some of these Norwegian colonists in Ireland sought his aid in the hope that English rule might be overthrown.†

It has long been known that many of the tales of Irish wonders and miracles that are recounted in the *Speculum Regale* are also told in the *Topographia Hibernica* by Giraldus Cambrensis. The famous Welshman wrote his work several decades before the *King's Mirror* was composed; and it is not impossible that the author of the latter had access to the "Irish Topography." Moreover, the *Speculum Regale* and the *Topographia*

* Cc. xii, xvi.

† *Hákonar Saga*, c. 322.

Hibernica have certain common features which correspond so closely that literary kinship seems quite probable. The resemblances, however, are not so much in the details as in the plan and the viewpoint. In the second book of his "Topography," Giraldus recounts "first those things that nature has planted in the land itself;" and next "those things that have been miraculously performed through the merits of the saints." * The author of the *King's Mirror* has adopted a similar grouping. After having discussed some of the wonders of the island he continues: "There still remain certain things that may be thought marvelous; these, however, are not native to the land but have originated in the miraculous powers of holy men." † This correspondence in the general plan is too remarkable to be wholly accidental; at least it should lead us to look for other resemblances elsewhere.

In his general description of Ireland the author of the Norwegian work calls attention to the excellence of the land and its temperate climate: "for all through the winter the cattle find their feed in the open." ‡ Giraldus informs us that grass grows in winter as well as in summer, and he adds: "therefore they are accustomed neither to cut hay for fodder nor to provide stables for the cattle." § Both writers emphasize the fact that grapes do not grow on the island. In both writings attention is called to the sacred character of the Irish soil, which makes it impossible for reptiles and venomous animals to live on the land, though Giraldus has his doubts as to the supernatural phase of the matter. Both writers

* *Topographia Hibernica*, ii, introd.: *Opera*, V, 74. † C. xi.

‡ c. x. § *Topographia Hibernica*, i, c. xxxiii: *Opera*, V, 67.

add that if sand or dust is brought from Ireland to another country and scattered about a reptile, it will perish.* Both characterize the Irish people as savage and murderous, but they also call attention to their kind treatment of holy men, of whom the island has always had many.† In fact, every statement in the *King's Mirror* as to the nature of the land and the character of the inhabitants can be duplicated in Giraldus' description of Ireland, except, perhaps, the single observation that the Irish people, because of the mildness of the climate, often wear no clothes.

But even if Giraldus' work is to be regarded as one of the sources which the Norwegian author may have used in writing his chapters on the Irish mirabilia, it cannot have been the only or even the principal source. The account of these marvels in the *King's Mirror* does not wholly agree with that of the Welshman's work. In some instances the wonders are told with details that are wanting in the earlier narrative. Frequently, too, the Norwegian version is more explicit as to localities and gives proper names where Giraldus has none. It also records marvels and miracles which are not found in the *Topographia Hibernica*.

In an edition of the *Irish Nennius* the editor has added as an appendix a brief account of the "Wonders of Ireland," many of the tales of which have interesting parallels in the *King's Mirror*. There is also a medieval poem on the same theme ‡ which contains allusions to much that the Norwegian author has recorded with

* Giraldus, *Opera*, V, 62-64; *King's Mirror*, c. x.

† *Topographia Hibernica*, iii, c. 28; *King's Mirror*, c. x.

‡ See Wright-Halliwel, *Reliquiae Antiquae*, II, 103-107.

greater fulness. Neither of these works, however, can have been the source from which the chapters on Ireland in the *Speculum Regale* have been derived.

The learned editors of the Christiania edition of the *King's Mirror* reached the conclusion that the author did not draw from any literary source but derived his information from current tales and other oral accounts.* This is also the opinion of Dr. Kuno Meyer, the eminent student of Celtic philology.† Dr. Meyer bases his belief on the form of the Irish proper names. As written in the *Speculum Regale* they can not have been copied, as the spelling is not normally Irish; he believes, therefore, that they show an effort on the author's part to reproduce phonetically these names as he heard them spoken. But this theory ignores the fact that in writing them the author employs combinations of consonants which are unusual to say the least. Combinations of *ch* and *gh* are used in writing nearly all the Irish proper names that occur in the *King's Mirror* and the *gh*-combination is found nowhere else in the work.‡ It was probably coming into the language in the century to which the work is credited, but the author uses it only as indicated above. It seems likely, therefore, that he had access to a written source, though it is also likely that he did not have this account before him when the writing was actually done. As has already been stated,

* P. x. † *Ériu*, IV., 14-16.

‡ In a letter to the writer Professor Meyer expresses the belief that the use of *gh* in the Irish proper names is an invention by the author. The combination of *c* and *h* is also used in certain other proper names, the system varying in the different manuscripts. For a discussion of the writing of proper names in the chief manuscript, see the American Facsimile Edition of the *Konungs Skuggsjá* (edited by G. T. Flom), xxxvii-xxxix.

the author seems to have written largely from memory, and his memory is not always accurate.

Having discussed the subjects which he considers of chief importance for the education of a merchant, the learned father proceeds to describe the king's household and its organization, the manners which one should observe at court, and the business that is likely to come before a king. For the part which deals with the royal court, it is probable that no literary sources were used. The author evidently wrote from long experience in the king's retinue; he is not discussing an ideal organization but the king's household as it was in Bergen and Trondhjem in his own day. If he drew from any written description of courtly manners, it may have been from some book like Petrus Alfonsus' *Disciplina Clericalis*, which has already been mentioned * and which seems to have had a wide circulation throughout western Europe in the later middle ages.

The chapters that are devoted to the discussion of the duties and activities of the king's guardsmen, to the manners and customs which should rule in the king's garth, and to the ethical ideas on which these were largely based are of great interest to the student of medieval culture. They reveal a progress in the direction of refined life and polished manners, which one should scarcely expect to find in the Northern lands. The development of courtesy and refined manners may have been accelerated by the new literature which was coming into Scandinavia from France and Germany, a literature that dealt so largely with the doings of

* See above, pp. 9-10.

knights and kings;* but it was probably not so much a matter of bookish instruction as of direct imitation. The Northmen, though they lived far from the great centers of culture, were always in close touch with the rest of the world. In the earlier centuries the viking sailed his dreaded craft wherever there was wealth and plunder and civilized life. After him and often as his companion came the merchant who brought away new ideas along with other desirable wares. After a time Christianity was introduced from the southlands, and the pilgrim and the crusader took the place of the heathen pirate. And all these classes helped to reshape the life of courtesy in the Northern countries.

It is difficult to overestimate the influence of the crusader as a pioneer of Christian culture in Scandinavia, but it seems possible that the pilgrim was even more important in this respect. It was no doubt largely through his journeys that German influences began to be felt in the Scandinavian lands, though it is possible that the wide activities of the Hanseatic merchants should also be credited with some importance for the spread of Teutonic culture. It is told in the *King's Mirror* that a new mode of dressing the hair and the beard had been introduced from Germany since the author had retired from the royal court.† It is significant that the routes usually followed by Norwegian pilgrims who sought the Eternal City and the holy places in the Orient ran through German lands. As a rule the pilgrims traveled through Jutland, Holstein, and the Old Saxon territories and reached the Rhine at

* See above, pp. 2-3.

† C. xxx.

Mainz. It was also possible to take a more easterly route, and sometimes the travelers would go by sea to the Low Countries and thence southward past Utrecht and Cologne; but all these three routes converged at Mainz, whence the journey led up the Rhine and across the Alps. It will be noted that a long stretch of the journey from Norway to Rome would lead through the German kingdom. Concerning the people of the Old Saxon or German lands an Icelandic scribe makes the following significant remark: "In that country the people are more polished and courteous than in most places and the Northmen imitate their customs quite generally." *

The cultural influences which followed in the wake of the returning crusaders were no doubt largely of Frankish origin. As a rule the crusading expeditions followed the sea route along the coasts of France and the Spanish peninsula; thus the Northern warriors came in contact with French ideas and customs in the Frankish homeland as well as in the Christian armies, which were largely made up of enthusiastic and venturesome knights from Frankland. The author of the *King's Mirror* urges his son to learn Latin and French, "for these idioms are most widely used." †

One of the reasons why the son wishes to master the mercantile profession is that he desires to travel and

* Nikolas Sæmundarson, abbot of Thingeyrar, who made a journey to the Holy Land about 1151, wrote an itinerary for the use of pilgrims from which the above quotation is taken. The itinerary is summarized in Riant, *Expéditions et Pèlerinages des Scandinaves en Terre Sainte*, 80-87.

† C. iii. It is likely that English culture found its way into the North along with the French. When King Sigurd sailed to the Orient in 1107, he spent the winter of 1107-1108 at the English court.

learn the customs of other lands.* In the thirteenth century the Norwegian trade still seems to have been largely with England and the other parts of the British Isles. It is also important to remember that the Norwegian church was a daughter of the church of England, and that occasionally English churchmen were elevated to high office in the Norwegian establishment. It is likely that Master William, who was Hakon IV's chaplain, was an Englishman; at least he bore an English name.†

Information as to foreign civilization and the rules of courteous behavior could also pass from land to land and from court to court with the diplomatic missions of the time. The wise father states that envoys who come and go are careful to observe the manners that obtain at the courts to which they are sent.‡ Frequent embassies must have passed between the capitals of England and Norway in the thirteenth century. It is recorded that both King John and his son Henry III received envoys from the king of Norway, and that they brought very acceptable gifts, such as hawks and elks,§ especially the former: in twelve different years Hakon IV sent hawks to the English king.||

Embassies also came quite frequently from the imperial court in Germany. It was during the reign of Hakon IV that the Hohenstaufens were waging their last fight with the papacy, and both sides in the conflict seemed anxious to secure the friendship of the great

* C. iii.

† *Hákonar Saga*, c. 228.

‡ C. xxix.

§ *Rotuli Litterarum Clausarum*, I, 382, 506, 509.

|| Olafsen, "Falkefangsten i Norge": *Historisk Tidsskrift*, Femte Række, III, 351.

Norwegian king. The Saga of Hakon relates that early in the king's reign "missions began between the emperor and King Hakon."* In 1241, "when King Hakon came to the King's Crag, that man came to him whose name was Matthew, sent from the emperor Frederick with many noble gifts. Along with him came from abroad five Bluemen (negroes)."† Just how acceptable such a gift would be in medieval Norway the chronicler does not state. There can be no doubt, however, that Hakon returned the courtesy. The saga mentions several men who were sent on diplomatic errands to the imperial court. One of these emissaries had to go as far as Sicily, "and the emperor received him well."‡

The relationship with the other Scandinavian kingdoms was more direct. The *King's Mirror* states that occasionally kings find it necessary to meet in conference for the discussion of common problems; and that on such occasions the members of the various retinues note carefully the customs and manners of the other groups.§ These meetings were usually held at some point near the mouth of the Göta River, where the boundaries of the three kingdoms touched a common point. In 1254 such a meeting was held at which Hakon of Norway, Christopher of Denmark, and the great Earl Birger of Sweden were in attendance with their respective retinues.||

The kings of the North were not limited, however, in their diplomatic intercourse to the neighboring monarchies; their ambassadors went out to the remotest parts

* *Hákonar Saga*, c. 191.

† *Ibid.*, c. 243.

‡ *Ibid.*, c. 191.

§ C. xxix.

|| *Hákonar Saga*, c. 281.

of Europe and even to Africa. Valdemar the Victorious, in his day one of the greatest rulers in Christendom, married as his first wife Dragomir, a Bohemian princess who brought the Dagmar name into Denmark, and took as his second consort Berengaria of Portugal, Queen Bengjerd, whose lofty pride is enshrined in the Danish ballads of the age. Hakon IV married the daughter of his restless rival, Duke Skule; but his daughter Christina was sought in marriage by a prince in far-away Spain. The luckless princess was sent to Castile and was married at Valladolid to a son of Alfonso the Wise.* Louis IX of France was anxious to enlist the support of the Norwegian king for his crusading ventures and sent the noted English historian Matthew Paris to present the matter to King Hakon.† The mission, however, was without results. Norwegian diplomacy was concerned even with the courts of the infidel: in 1262 an embassy was sent to the Mohammedan sultan of Tunis “with many falcons and those other things which were there hard to get. And when they got out the Soldan received them well, and they stayed there long that winter.”‡

An important event of the diplomatic type was the coming of Cardinal William of Sabina as papal legate to crown King Hakon. The coronation ceremony was performed in Bergen, July 29, 1247. At the coronation banquet the cardinal made a speech in which, as the Saga of Hakon reports his remarks, he called particular attention to the polished manners of the Northmen.

* *Hákonar Saga*, c. 294.

† Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora*, IV, 651-652.

‡ *Hákonar Saga*, c. 313.

“It was told me that I would here see few men; but even though I saw some, they would be liker to beasts in their behaviour than to men; but now I see here a countless multitude of the folk of this land, and, as it seems to me, with good behaviour.” * If the *King's Mirror* gives a correct statement of what was counted good manners and proper conduct at the court of Hakon IV, the cardinal's praise is none too strong.

As a part of his discussion of the duties and activities of the king's henchmen, the author describes the military methods of the age, arms and armour, military engines and devices used in offensive and defensive warfare, and other necessary equipment.† He also discusses the ethics of the military profession to some extent. This part of the work has been made the subject of a detailed study by Captain Otto Blom of the Danish artillery, who has tried to fix a date for the composition of the *King's Mirror* on the basis of these materials.‡ It is not likely, however, that the work describes the military art of the North; such an elaborate system of equipment and such a variety of military engines and devices the Norwegians probably never knew at any time in the middle ages. It is the military art of Europe which the author describes, especially the war machinery of the crusades. One should not be surprised to find that he had knowledge of the devices which were employed by the Christian hosts in their warfare against the infidel in the Orient. The crusades attracted the Norwegian warriors and they took a part in them almost from the

* *Hákonar Saga*, c. 255. (Dasent's translation.)

† Cc. xxxviii-xxxix.

‡ See below, pp. 62-63.

beginning. The fifth crusade began in 1217, the year of Hakon IV's accession to the kingship. Several Norwegian chiefs with their followers joined this movement, some marching by land through Germany and Hungary, while others took the sea route. One is tempted to believe that the author was himself a crusader, but it is also possible that he got his information as to the military art of the south and east from warriors who returned from those lands.

From the subject of proper behavior and good breeding the author passes to a discussion of evil conduct and its effect on the welfare of the kingdom. Many causes, he tells us, may combine to bring calamities upon a land, and if the evils continue any length of time, the realm will be ruined.* There may come dearth upon the fields and the fishing grounds near the shores; plagues may carry away cattle, and the huntsman may find a scarcity of game; but worst of all is the dearth which sometimes comes upon the intellects and the moral nature of men. As a prolific source of calamities of the last sort, the author mentions the institution of joint kingship, the evils of which he discusses at some length. His chapter on this subject is an epitome of Norwegian history in the twelfth century when joint kingship was the rule.

According to the laws of medieval Norway before the thirteenth century, the national kingship was the king's allodial possession and was inherited by his sons at his death. All his sons were legal heirs, those of illegitimate birth as well as those who were born in wedlock. When

* C. xxxv.

there was more than one heir, the kingship was held jointly, all the claimants receiving the royal title and permission to maintain each his own household. Usually a part of the realm was assigned to each; but it was the administration, and not the kingdom itself, which was thus divided. It is readily seen that such a system would offer unusual opportunities for pretenders; and at least three times in one hundred years men whose princely rights were at best of a doubtful character mounted the Norwegian throne. It is an interesting fact that two of these, the strenuous Sverre and the wise Hakon IV, must be counted among the strongest, ablest, and most attractive kings in the history of Norway.

Though there had been instances of joint rule before the twelfth century, the history of that unfortunate form of administration properly begins with the death of Magnus Bareleg on an Irish battlefield in 1103. Three illegitimate sons, the oldest being only fourteen years of age, succeeded to the royal title. One of these was the famous Sigurd Jerusalemfarer, who took part in the later stages of the first crusade. About twenty years after King Magnus' death, a young Irishman, Harold Gilchrist by name, appeared at the Norwegian court and claimed royal rights as a son of the fallen king. King Sigurd forced him to prove his birthright by an appeal to the ordeal, but the Irishman walked unhurt over the hot plowshares. Harold became king in 1130 as joint ruler with Sigurd's son Magnus, later called "the Blind."* Three of his sons succeeded to the

* The strife that followed the accession of Harold Gille and Magnus the Blind is the subject of Björnson's great historical drama, *Sigurd Slembe* (English translation by William Morton Payne).

kingship in 1136. During the next century several pretenders appeared and civil war became almost the normal state of the country. Between 1103 and 1217 fifteen princes were honored with the royal title; eleven of these were minors. The period closed with the defeat and death of King Hakon's father-in-law, the pretender Skule, in 1240.

It was the history of these hundred years and more of joint kingship, of pretenders, of minorities, and of civil war, which the author of the *King's Mirror* had in mind when he wrote his gloomy chapter on the calamities that may befall a state. Perhaps he was thinking more especially of the unnatural conflict between King Hakon and Duke Skule,* which was fought out in 1240, and the memory of which was still fresh at the time when the *King's Mirror* was being written.

Of the king and his duties as ruler and judge the *Speculum Regale* has much to say; but as these matters offer no problems that call for discussion, it will not be necessary to examine them in detail. Wholly different is the case of the king's relation to the church, of the position of the church in the state, of the divine origin of kingship, of the fulness of the royal authority. On these questions the author's opinions and arguments are of great importance: in the history of the theory of kingship by the grace of God and divine right and of absolute monarchy, the *Speculum Regale* is an important landmark.

In the discussion of the origin and powers of the royal office, the *King's Mirror* again shows unmistakably the

* See below, p. 48.

influence of events in the preceding century of Norwegian history. So long as the church of Norway was under the supervision of foreign archbishops, first the metropolitan of distant Hamburg and later the archbishop of the Danish (now Swedish) see of Lund, there was little likelihood of any serious clash between the rival powers of church and state. But when, in 1152, an archiepiscopal see was established at Nidaros (Trondhjem) trouble broke out at once. The wave of enthusiasm for a powerful and independent church, which had developed such vigor in the days of Gregory VII, was still rising high. Able men were appointed to the new metropolitan office and the Norwegian church very soon put forth the usual demands of the time: separate ecclesiastical courts and immunity from anything that looked like taxation or forced contribution to the state. At first these claims had no reality in fact, as the kings would not allow them; but in 1163 * an opportunity came for the church to make its demands effective. In that year a victorious faction asked for the coronation of a new king whose claims to the throne came through his mother only. The pretender was a mere child and the actual power was in the hands of his capable and ambitious father, Erling Skakke. The imperious archbishop Eystein agreed to consecrate the boy king if he would consent to become the vassal of Saint Olaf, or, in other words, of the archbishop of Nidaros. Erling acquiesced and young Magnus was duly crowned. It was further stipulated that in future cases of disputed succession the

* The date usually given is 1164; but Ebbe Hertzberg argues quite conclusively for the earlier year. "Den første norske Kongekroning": *Historisk Tidsskrift*, Fjerde Række, III, 30-37.

final decision should rest with the bishops.* The state was formally made subject to the church. It must be noted, however, that it was not the head of Catholic Christendom who made these claims, but the chief prelate of the national Norwegian church. The theory was doubtless this, that if the pope is superior to the emperor, the archbishop is superior to the king.

The new arrangement did not long remain unchallenged. In 1177 the opposition to the ecclesiastical faction found a leader in Sverre, called Sigurdsson, an adventurer from the Faroe Islands, who pretended to be a grandson of Harold Gilchrist, though the probabilities are that his father was one Unas, a native of the Faroes.† Sverre's followers were known as Birchshanks, because they had been reduced to such straits that they had to bind birch bark around their legs. The faction in control of the government was called the Croziermen and was composed of the higher clergy with an important following among the aristocracy. Sverre's fight was, therefore, not against King Magnus alone but against the Guelph party of Norway. For half a century there was intermittent civil warfare between the supporters of an independent and vigorous kingship on the one side and the partisans of clerical control on the other. King Sverre's great service to Norway was that he broke the

* According to the new rules of succession the oldest legitimate son, if qualified for the office, should inherit the throne. The oldest might be passed over, however, in favor of a younger legitimate son, or even in favor of an illegitimate descendant, if the bishops should find such a procedure expedient. See Gjerset, *History of the Norwegian People*, I, 364.

† While it seems probable that Sverre was not of royal blood he was not necessarily an impostor; he may have believed his mother's assertions. For a discussion of the problem see *ibid.*, 376-377.

chain of ecclesiastical domination. The conflict was long and bitter and the great king died while it was still on; but when it ended the cause of the Croziermen was lost. The church attained to great power in the Norwegian state, but it never gained complete domination.

Sverre was a man of great intellectual strength; he was a born leader of men, a capable warrior, and a resourceful captain. When it began to look as if victory would crown his efforts, the archbishop fled to England and from his refuge in Saint Edmundsbury excommunicated the king. But exile is irksome to an ambitious man, and after a time the fiery prelate returned to Norway and was reconciled to the strenuous ruler. Eystein's successor, however, took up the fight once more; and when Sverre made Norway too uncomfortable for him, he fled to Denmark and excommunicated his royal opponent. A few years later, Innocent III, who had just ascended the papal throne, also excommunicated Sverre, and threatened the kingdom with an interdict.* But the papal weapons had little effect in the far North; the king forced priests and prelates to remain loyal and to continue in their duties. No doubt they obeyed the excommunicated ruler with great reluctance and much misgiving; but no other course was possible, for the nation was with the king.

The militant Faroese was a man with strong literary interests; he was educated for the priesthood and it is believed that he had actually taken orders. He was elo-

* It is usually stated that Innocent III actually did lay an interdict on the land, but this appears to be an error. He authorized the bishops to do so, but they seem not to have made use of the authorization. See Bull, "Interdiktet mot Sverre": *Historisk Tidsskrift*, Femte Række, III, 321-324.

quent in speech, but he realized the power of the written as well as of the spoken word. It is a fact worth noting that among the Northmen of the thirteenth century learning was not confined to the clergy. While the author of the *King's Mirror* urges the prospective merchant to learn Latin and French, he also warns him not to neglect his mother tongue. King Sverre replied to the ecclesiastical decrees with a manifesto in the Norwegian language in which he stated his position and his claims for the royal office. This pamphlet, which is commonly known as "An Address against the Bishops," was issued about 1199 and was sent to all the shire courts to be read to the freemen. It was a cleverly written document and seems to have been very effective. In spite of the fact that the king was under the ban, the masses remained loyal.

Between the political theory of the *Address* and the ideas of kingship expressed in the *King's Mirror* there is an agreement which can hardly be accidental. It is more likely that we have in this case literary kinship of the first degree. It has been thought that King Sverre may have prepared his manifesto himself, but this is scarcely probable. Some one of his court, however, must have composed it, perhaps some clerk in the royal scriptorium, for the ideas developed in the document are clearly those of the king. It has also been suggested that the *Address* and the *Speculum Regale* may have been written by the same hand; * but the only evidence in support of such a conclusion is this agreement of political

* This appears to be Heffermehl's opinion. See *Historiske Skrifter tilegnede Ludvig Daae*, 87.

ideas, which may have originated in a careful study of the earlier document by the author of the later work.

King Sverre's *Address* begins with a violent attack on the higher clergy: the bishops have brought sorrow upon the land and confusion into holy church. This deplorable condition is ascribed chiefly to a reckless use of the power of excommunication. In this connection the king is careful to absolve the pope from all guilt: his unfortunate deeds were due to ignorance and to false representations on the part of the bishops. It is next argued that excommunication is valid only when the sentence of anathema is just; an unjust sentence is not only invalid but it recoils upon the head of him who is the author of the anathema. In support of this contention the author of the manifesto quotes the opinions of such eminent fathers as Saint Jerome, Saint Augustine, Pope Gregory the Great, and other authorities on canon law. It will be remembered that the king himself was under the ban at the time. The author argues further that his view is supported by reason as well as by the law of the church. Bishops have been appointed shepherds of the flocks of God; they are to watch over them, not drive them away into the jaws of the wolves. But if a bishop excommunicates one who is without guilt, he consigns him to hell; and if his decree is effective, he destroys one of God's sheep.

From this subject the *Address* passes to the nature of the royal office. "So great a number of examples show clearly that the salvation of a man's soul is at stake if he does not observe complete loyalty, kingly worship, and a right obedience; for kingly rule is created by God's

command and not by the ordinance of man, and no man can obtain royal authority except by divine dispensation." The king is not a secular ruler only, he also has holy church in his power and keeping. It is his right and duty to appoint church officials, and the churchmen owe him absolute loyalty the same as his other subjects. Christ pointed out the duty of church officials quite clearly when he paid tribute to his earthly ruler, one who was, moreover, a heathen.*

It will be seen that the *Address* puts forth four claims of far-reaching importance: kingship is of divine origin and the king rules by the grace of God; the power of royalty extends to the church as well as to the state and includes the power to appoint the rulers of the church; disloyalty to the king is a mortal sin; an unjust sentence of excommunication is invalid and injures him only who publishes the anathema. On all these points the *King's Mirror* is in complete agreement with Sverre's manifesto.

In the course of the dialog in the *Speculum Regale* the son requests his father to take up and discuss the office and business of the king; for, says he, "he is so highly honored and exalted upon earth that all must bend and bow before him as before God."† The father accounts for the power and dignity of kingship in this way: men bow before the king as before God, because he represents the exalted authority of God; he bears God's own name and occupies the highest judgment

* The *Address* is published as an appendix to the Christiania edition of the *King's Mirror*. It has also been issued in separate form under the title *En Tale mod Biskopperne*; this edition is by Gustav Storm.

† C. xliii.

seat upon earth; consequently, when one honors a king, it is as if he honors God himself, because of the title that he has from God.*

The author evidently realizes that statements of this sort will not be accepted without further argument, and he naturally proceeds to give his doctrine a basis in Biblical history. The reverence due kingship is fully illustrated with episodes in the career of David. So long as God permitted King Saul to live, David would do nothing to deprive him of his office; for Saul was also the Lord's anointed. He took swift revenge upon the man who came to his camp pretending that he had slain Saul; for he had sinned against God in bearing arms against His anointed. He also calls attention to Saint Peter's injunction: "Fear God and honor your king;" and adds that it is "almost as if he had literally said that he who does not show perfect honor to the king does not fear God."†

To emphasize his contention that kingship is of divine origin, the author cites the example of Christ. The miracle of the fish in whose mouth the tribute money was found is referred to in the *Address* as well as in the *King's Mirror*. Peter was to examine the first fish, not the second or the third. In the same way, and here the argument is characteristically medieval, "every man should in all things first honor the king and the royal dignity; for God Himself calls the king His anointed."‡

But, objects the son, how could Christ who is himself the lord of heaven and earth be willing to submit to an earthly authority? To this the father replies that

* C. xliii.

† C. xlv.

‡ *Ibid.*

Christ came to earth as a guest and did not wish to deprive the divine institution of kingship of any honor or dignity.* The author evidently deems it important to establish this contention; for if Christ submitted to Caesar as to a rightful authority, the church in opposing secular rulers could scarcely claim to be following in the footsteps of the Master.

It seems to be a safe conclusion that the doctrine of the divine character of kingship as developed in the *King's Mirror* is derived from King Sverre's *Address*, unless it should be that the two have drawn from a common source. There is nothing novel about Sverre's ideas except the form in which they are stated; fundamentally they are a return to the original Norwegian theory of kingship. The Norwegian kings of heathen times were descendants of divine ancestors. They recognized the will of the popular assemblies as a real limitation on their own powers, but no religious authority could claim superiority to the ruler. The king was indeed himself a priest, a mediator between the gods and men. The Christian kings for a century and a half had controlled the church in a very real manner; they had appointed bishops and had also on occasion removed them. The claim of the archbishop to overlordship was therefore distinctly an innovation. The king makes use of arguments from the Bible to support his theory, not because it was based on Scriptural truths, but because to a Christian people these would prove the most convincing.

In his statement of the fulness and majesty of the royal power, the author of the *Speculum Regale* goes,

* C. xliv.

however, far beyond the author of the *Address*. So complete is the king's power, "that he may dispose as he likes of the lives of all who live in his kingdom." * He "owns the entire kingdom as well as all the people in it, so that all the men who are in his kingdom owe him service whenever his needs demand it." † These sentences would indicate that the author's position lies close to the verge of absolutism. But Norwegian kingship was anything but absolute; the king had certain well-defined rights, but the people also had some part in the government. Professor Ludvig Daae has put forth the hypothesis that the author of the *King's Mirror* was acquainted with the governmental system of Frederick II in his Italian kingdom, which he governed as an absolute monarch. ‡ There may be some truth in this for there is no doubt that the character of Frederick's government was known to the Northmen; but it is also possible that the theory of absolute monarchy had a separate Norse origin, that the insistence on divine right in the long fight with the church had driven the partisans of monarchy far forward along the highway that led to practical absolutism. Less than a generation after the *King's Mirror* was composed, the newer ideas of kingship appear in the legislation of Magnus Lawmender. Kings have received their authority from God, for "God Himself deigns to call Himself by their name;" and the preamble continues: "he is, indeed, in great danger before God, who does not with perfect love and reverence uphold them in the authority to which God

* C. xliii.

† C. xxviii.

‡ "Studier angaaende Kongespeilet": *Aarbøger for nordisk Oldkyndighed*, 1896, 189.

has appointed them.”* This is the doctrine of the *Address* as well as of the *Speculum*; the significant fact is that the principle has now been introduced into the constitution of the monarchy. It is possible that the author of the *King's Mirror* states an alien principle; but it is more probable that he merely gives form to a belief that had been growing among Northmen for some time.

On the question of the validity of excommunication the teachings of the *Speculum Regale* are in perfect accord with those of the *Address*. The uncompromising position and methods of Innocent III had given point to an exceedingly practical question: was a Christian permitted to obey a king who was under the ban of the church? Generally the church held that obedience under the circumstances would be sinful. The author of the *Speculum* distinguishes closely, however, between just and unjust sentences of excommunication. God has established two houses upon earth, the house of the altar and the house of the judgment seat.† There is, therefore, a legitimate sphere of action for the bishop as well as for the king. But an act is not necessarily righteous because it emanates from high authority either in the church or in the state. If the king pronounces an unjust judgment, his act is murder; if a bishop excommunicates a Christian without proper reasons, the ban is of no effect, except that it reacts upon the offending prelate himself.‡

After the author has thus denied the right of the church to use the sword of excommunication in certain

* *Norges gamle Love*, II, 23; Gjerset, *History of the Norwegian People*, I, 463.

† C. lxix.

‡ C. lxx.

cases, there remains the question: has the king any superior authority over the church? The answer is, that the king has such authority; and the author fortifies his position by recalling the story how Solomon punished Abiathar the high priest, or bishop as he is called in the *King's Mirror*. In reply to the young man's inquiry whether Solomon did right when he deprived Abiathar of the high-priestly office, the father affirms that the king acted properly and according to law. The king is given a two-edged sword for the reason that he must guard, not only his own house of judgment, but also the house of the altar, which is ordinarily in the bishop's keeping. Abiathar had sinned in becoming a party to the treasonable intrigues of Adonijah, who was plotting to seize the throne of Israel while his father David was still living. Inasmuch as the high priest had attempted to deprive the Lord's anointed of his royal rights, Solomon would have been guiltless even if he had taken Abiathar's life. The author also calls attention to the fact that Abiathar was elevated to the high-priestly office by David himself.*

On the question of the king's right to control episcopal appointments the *King's Mirror* is also in agreement with the earlier *Address*. On the death of Archbishop John, the *Address* tells us, "Inge appointed Eystein, his own chaplain, to the archiepiscopal office † . . . without consulting any cleric in Trondhjem, either the canons or any one else; and he drove Bishop Paul from the episcopal throne in Bergen and chose Nicholas Petersson to be his successor." Doubtless the philosopher

* C. lxx.

† Archbishop Eystein was consecrated in 1161.

of the *King's Mirror*, when he wrote of the fall of Abiathar, was also thinking of the many Abiathars of Norwegian history in the twelfth century, especially, perhaps, of the bishops of Sverre's reign, who had striven so valiantly to rid the nation of its energetic king. There can be no doubt, however, that he regarded the hierarchy as inferior to the secular government. A bishop, who unrighteously excommunicates a Norwegian king and attempts in this way to render him impossible as a ruler, forfeits not only his office but his life.

There was another problem in the middle ages which also involved the question of ecclesiastical authority as opposed to secular jurisdiction, the right of sanctuary. There can be no doubt that in the unsettled state of medieval society it was well that there were places where an accused might find security for a time at least; but the right of sanctuary was much abused, too frequently it served to shield the guilty. The *King's Mirror* teaches unequivocally that the right of sanctuary cannot be invoked against the orders of the king. As usual the author finds support for his position in the Scriptures. Joab fled to God's tabernacle and laid hold on the horns of the altar; nevertheless, King Solomon ordered him to be slain, and the command was carried out.* Solomon appears to have reasoned in this wise: "It is my duty to carry out the provisions of the sacred law, no matter where the man happens to be whose case is to be determined." It was not his duty to remove Joab by force, for all just decisions are God's decisions and not the king's; and "God's holy altar will not be defiled or desecrated by

* C. lxvi.

Joab's blood, for it will be shed in righteous punishment." * And the author is careful to emphasize the fact that God's tabernacle was the only house in all the world that was dedicated to Him, and must consequently have had an even greater claim to sacredness than the churches of the author's own day, of which there was a vast number. †

There was a Norwegian Joab in the first half of the thirteenth century, who, like the chieftain of old, plotted against his rightful monarch and was finally slain within the sacred precincts of an Augustinian convent. Skule, King Hakon's father-in-law, was a man of restless ambition, who could not find complete satisfaction in the titles of earl and duke, but stretched forth his hand to seize the crown itself. In 1239 he assumed the royal title, but a few months later (1240) his forces were surprised in Nidaros by the king's army, and the rebellion came to a sudden end. Skule's men fled to the churches; his son Peter found refuge in one of the buildings belonging to the monastery of Elgesæter, but was discovered and slain. After a few days Duke Skule himself sought security in the same monastery; but the angry Birchshanks, in spite of the solemn warnings and threatenings of the offended monks, slew the pretender and burned the monastery. ‡ This was an act of violence which must have caused much trouble for the king's partisans, and it is most likely the act which the author of the *King's Mirror* had in his thoughts when he wrote of the fate of Joab.

* C. lxix.

† C. lxvii.

‡ *Hákonar Saga*, cc. 239-241; Munch, *Det norske Folks Historie*, III, 977-978.

Writers on political philosophy usually begin their specific discussion of the theory of divine right of kingship when they come to the great political theorists of the fourteenth century.* The most famous of these is Marsiglio of Padua, who wrote his *Defensor Pacis* in 1324. In this work he asserted that the emperor derived his title and sovereignty from God and that his authority was superior to that of the pope. Some years earlier William Occam, an English scholar and philosopher, made similar claims for the rights of the king of France. Earlier still, perhaps in 1310, Dante had claimed divine right for princes generally in his famous work *De Monarchia*. Somewhat similar, though less precise, ideas had been expressed by John of Paris in 1305. But nearly two generations earlier the doctrine had been stated in all its baldness and with all its implications by the author of the *King's Mirror*; and more than a century before Dante wrote his work on "Monarchy" Sverre had published his *Address* to the Norwegian people. So far as the writer has been able to determine there is no treatise on general medieval politics, at least no such treatise written in English, which contains even an allusion to these two significant works.

The ethical ideas that are outlined in the *Speculum Regale* are also of more than common interest. On most points the learned father preaches the conventional principles of the church with respect to right and wrong conduct, and as a rule his precepts are such as have stood the test of ages of experience. He emphasizes honesty, fair dealing, careful attendance upon worship,

* On this subject, see Figgis, *Divine Right of Kings*, c. iii.

and devotion to the church; he warns his son to shun vice of every sort; he must also avoid gambling and drinking to excess.* In some respects the author's moral code is Scandinavian rather than Christian: in the emphasis that he places upon reputation and the regard in which one is held by one's neighbors he seems to echo the sentiment that runs through the earlier Eddic poetry, especially the "Song of the High One." "One thing I know that always remains," says Woden, "judgment passed on the dead."† And the Christian scribe more than three centuries later writes thus of one who has departed this life: "But if he lived uprightly while on earth and made proper provision for his soul before he died, then you may take comfort in the good repute that lives after him, and even more in the blissful happiness which you believe he will enjoy with God in the other world."‡ And again he says: "Now you will appreciate what I told you earlier in our conversation, namely that much depends on the example that a man leaves after him."§

The author is also Norse in his emphasis on moderation in every form of indulgence, on the control of one's passion, and in permitting private revenge. His attitude toward this present world is not medieval: we may enjoy the good things of creation, though not to excess. On the matter of revenge, however, his ideas are characteristically medieval. Private warfare was allowed almost everywhere in the middle ages, and it appears to have a place in the political system of the *Speculum Regale*.

* Cc. iii-iv, xxxvii.

† *Hávamál*, 40: *Corpus Poeticum Boreale*, I, 8.

‡ C. xli.

§ C. xlii.

But on this point too the author urges moderation. "When you hear things in the speech of other men which offend you much, be sure to investigate with reasonable care whether the tales be true or false; but if they prove to be true and it is proper for you to seek revenge, take it with reason and moderation and never when heated or irritated." *

The theology of the *King's Mirror*, as far as it can be discerned, is also medieval, though it is remarkable that the Virgin and the saints find only incidental mention in the work. No doubt if the author had been able to complete his treatise as outlined in his introduction, he would have discussed the forms and institutions of the church at greater length and we should be able to know to what extent his theological notions were in agreement with the religious thought of the age.

In this connection his theory of penance and punishment for crime is of peculiar interest. He makes considerable use of Biblical narratives to illustrate his teachings and refers at length to some of the less worthy characters of Holy Writ, including certain men who suffered death for criminal offenses. Almost invariably he justifies the punishment by arguing that it was better for the criminal to suffer a swift punishment in death than to suffer eternally in hell. Apparently his theory is that a criminal can cleanse himself in his own blood, that a temporal death can save him from eternal punishment. The idolaters who were slain by Moses and the Levites † "were cleansed in their penance and in the pangs which they suffered when they died; and it was

* C. xli. † Exodus, xxxii.

much better for them to suffer a brief pain in death than a long torture in hell." The sacramental efficiency of the death penalty seems also to extend to the one who executes punishment: for those who assisted Moses in the slaughter sanctified their hands in the blood of those who were slain. In the same way "a king cleanses himself in the blood of the unjust, if he slays them as a rightful punishment to fulfil the sacred laws."*

There can be little doubt that this doctrine of the death penalty also shows the influence of the great civil conflict which ended with the death of Duke Skule in 1240. During a century of factional warfare there had been much violence, much slaughter, much "swift punishment." Applied to Norwegian history the author's argument amounts to a justification of the slaughter at Elgesæter; for Skule and his partisans had rebelled against the Lord's anointed. The hands of the Birchshanks were cleansed and sanctified in the blood of the rebels; but the author also has this comforting assurance for the kinsmen of the fallen, that their souls were not lost: Skule and his companions were cleansed from their sins in the last great penance of death.

It may also be that this same long record of violence, treason, and rebellion was responsible for the prominence that the *King's Mirror* gives to the duty of obedience. In the political ethics of the work obedience is the chief virtue and the central principle. Conversely disobedience is the greatest of all sins. When Saul spared the Amalekites, whom the Lord had ordered him to destroy, he sinned far more grievously than did David when he

* C. lxi.

dishonored Uriah's wife and afterward brought about Uriah's death; for Saul neglected to carry out the commands of God, and "no offense is graver than to be disobedient toward one's superiors." *

The *King's Mirror* is a medieval document; it was in large part inspired by the course of events in Norway during the century of the civil wars; it records the scientific and political thought of a certain definite period in Norwegian history. But even though the author of the work must be classed among the thinkers of his own time, his place is far in advance of most of his fellows. His outlook on the world is broader than that of most medieval writers. In matters of science he is less credulous and less bound by theological thought than others who wrote on these subjects in his own century or earlier. On such questions as the cause of earthquakes and the source of the northern lights he shows an open-mindedness, which is rarely met with in the middle ages.† For the author's view of life was not wholly medieval; on many subjects we find him giving utterance to thoughts which have a distinctly modern appearance. His theory of the state and its functions is distinctly unorthodox. But it is probably in the field of education where the great Northman is farthest in advance of his time. In his day the work of instruction was still in the hands of the church; and the churchmen showed no great anxiety to educate men except for the clerical profession. The *King's Mirror*, however, teaches that

* C. lxiii.

† See Larson, "Scientific Knowledge in the North in the Thirteenth Century": *Publications of the Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Study*, I, 141-146.

merchants must also be educated: they must learn the art of reckoning and those facts of science that are of interest to navigators; they must study languages, Latin, French, and Norwegian; and they must become thoroughly acquainted with the laws of the land. But the author does not stop here: a merchant should also educate his children. "If children be given to you, let them not grow up without learning a trade; for we may expect a man to keep closer to knowledge and business when he comes of age, if he is trained in youth while under control." *

The identity of the author of the *Speculum Regale* has never been disclosed. Anonymous authorship was not uncommon in medieval Norse literature: many of the sagas were written by men whose names are not known. In the thirteenth century, however, it had become customary for writers to claim the honors of authorship. Our philosopher of the *King's Mirror* clearly understood that his readers would be curious to know his name: if the book, he tells us in his introductory chapter, has any merit, that should satisfy the reader, and there is no reason why any one should wish to search out the name of the one who wrote it.† Evidently he had a purpose in concealing his identity, and the motive is not far to seek.

After the death of King Sverre (1202) the conflict between the king and the hierarchy ceased for a time. The church made peace with the monarchy; the exiled bishops returned; and the faction of the Croziermen disintegrated. After a few years, however, the old

* C. iv.

† C. i.

quarrels broke out anew. On the accession of Hakon IV the church yielded once more, though the prelates did not renounce their earlier claims. In 1245, when plans were being made for King Hakon's coronation, the bishops put forth the suggestion that the king should, on that occasion, renew the agreement of 1163, which gave the bishops control of the succession. But the great king refused. "If we swear such an oath as King Magnus swore, then it seems to us as though our honor would be lessened by it rather than increased."* He flatly asserted that he would be crowned without any conditions attached to the act, or the crown "shall never come upon our head."

After the arrival of Cardinal William of Sabina, who had been sent by the pope to officiate at the coronation, and while preparations for that joyous event were going forward, the subject was brought up once more. On the suggestion of the Norwegian bishops the cardinal asked the king to take Magnus Erlingsson's oath; but the king again refused, and the cardinal decided that "there is no need to speak of it oftener."† The king was crowned and there was peace between the two great forces of church and monarchy, at least so long as Hakon lived. Sometime not long before or after the coronation of the great king (1247) the *King's Mirror* seems to have been written. It is clear that such ideas as are enunciated in this work with respect to the submission of the church to the authorities of the state can not have been relished by the hierarchy, and perhaps they were just then somewhat unwelcome to the secular

* *Hákonar Saga*, c. 247.

† *Ibid.*, c. 251.

rulers as well, since a discussion of this sort might tend to renew ill feeling and stir up strife. Consequently the author may have thought it wiser to remain anonymous.

Earlier students of the *Speculum Regale* have believed that the author was some local chieftain, who had spent his more active days at the royal court, but who had later retired to his estates and was spending his declining years in literary pursuits. Various efforts have been made to find this chieftain,* but with no success; there is no evidence that the lords or crusaders who have been suggested as probable authors had any literary interests or abilities. There can be no doubt that the author was at one time a prominent member of the royal retinue; he asserts in several places that such was the case.† He is, furthermore, too thoroughly familiar with the organization of the royal household to have been an occasional courtier merely. At the same time it is not likely that he was a secular lord; it seems impossible that he could have been anything but a churchman. He knows the Latin language; he is well acquainted with sacred history; he has read a considerable number of medieval books. It is quite unlikely that the various types of learning that are reflected in the chapters of the *King's Mirror* could be found in the thirteenth century in any scholar outside the clerical profession. He could not have been one of the higher ecclesiastics, as the prelates belonged to the faction of the Croziermen. The *Speculum Regale* was evidently written by a member of the

* See the Sorø edition, xxiii; Munch, *Det norske Folks Historie*, III, 399, note.

† Cc. ii, iii, xxx.

Norwegian priesthood, though it is possible that he belonged to one of the minor orders. But at all events he was a professional churchman.*

There was an old belief in Norway that the work was written at King Sverre's court, perhaps by the priest-king himself;† but this theory is wholly without foundation. Professor Ludvig Daae, believing that only a few Northmen possessed the necessary qualifications for the authorship of such a work as the *King's Mirror*, concluded that it must have been written by Master William, one of the chaplains at the court of Hakon IV.‡ Master William was evidently a man of some erudition; he held a degree (*magister*) from a European university; he must have traveled abroad and was no doubt a man of experience; he lived and flourished in the period when the work must have been composed. But there is no shred of evidence that Master William actually wrote the *King's Mirror* or that he was interested in the problems that are discussed in this work.

More recently A. V. Heffermehl has made an attempt to prove that the author so long sought for was Ivar Bodde, a Norwegian priest, who seems to have played an important part in the history of Norway in the first half of the thirteenth century as an influential member of the anti-clerical party.§ Much is not known of Ivar

* Cf. Daae, "Studier angaaende Kongespeilet": *Aarbøger for nordisk Oldkyndighed*, 1896, 180-181. Daae holds that the author was a clergyman.

† *Ibid.*, 1896, 173.

‡ *Ibid.*, 1896, 192-196; see also pp. 179 ff. Daae believes that Master William must have held a position at court corresponding to the office of chancellor; he also conjectures that he was the tutor of the king's sons. Master William is mentioned in the *Hákonar Saga*, cc. 210, 228.

§ *Historiske Skrifter tilegnede Ludvig Daae*, 79-104 ("Presten Ivar Bodde"). Ivar is one of the characters in Ibsen's *Pretenders*.

Bodde, and nearly all that we do know comes from a speech which he is reported to have delivered in his own defence in 1217.* He entered King Sverre's service "before the fight was at Strindsea," which was fought in the summer of 1199. This was also the year in which King Sverre seems to have issued his famous *Address*. "I had good cheer from the king while he lived, and I served him so that at last I knew almost all his secret matters." In King Inge's reign (1204-1217) he served in the capacity of chancellor: "and that besides, which was much against my wish, they relied on me for writing letters." During the same reign he also served as Prince Hakon's foster father, and was consequently responsible for the education of the great king.† Ivar was also skilled in military arts: he was a warrior as well as a priest.‡ He was apparently twice sent to England on diplomatic errands, first to the court of King John, later to that of Henry III.§ He withdrew from the court in 1217. In 1223 he reappears as one of the king's chief counsellors. After this year nothing is known of Ivar Bodde.

The author of the *King's Mirror* was a professional churchman who belonged to the anti-clerical faction; he was a master of the literary art. Ivar Bodde was a man of this type; nothing is known of his literary abilities, but it is clear that a man who was entrusted with the king's correspondence can not have been without

* *Hákonar Saga*, c. 21.

† *Historiske Skrifter tilegnede Ludvig Daae*, 88-89 (Heffermehl); *Hákonar Saga*, c. 20.

‡ *Historiske Skrifter tilegnede Ludvig Daae*, 80.

§ *Ibid.*, 81, 85.

literary skill. There seems to be no reason why Ivar Bodde could not have written the *King's Mirror*, and he may also have had a hand in the preparation of Sverre's *Address*; but that he actually did write either or both of these important works has not yet been proved; there may have been other priests in Norway in the thirteenth century who stood for the divine right of Norwegian kingship.

From certain geographical allusions it is quite clear that the work was written in Norway and in some part of the country that would be counted far to the north. The author mentions two localities in the Lofoten region and he shows considerable knowledge of conditions elsewhere in Hálogaland; * but it is evident that he did not reside in that part of the kingdom when he was at work on his great treatise. It is generally agreed that the home of the *Speculum Regale* is Namdalen, a region which lies northeast of the city of Trondhjem and which touches the border of Halogaland on the north.† This conclusion is based on certain astronomical observations on the part of the author, namely the length of the shortest day, the daily increase in the length of the day, and the relationship between the length of the sun's path and the sun's altitude at noon of the longest and the shortest day.‡ The Norwegian astronomer Hans Geelmuyden has determined that if the author's statements on these points are to be regarded as scientific computations, they indicate a latitude of 65° , $64^{\circ} 42'$, and $64^{\circ} 52'$ respectively. All these points lie within the

* C. vii.

† See the Sorø edition, pp. lix-lx; the Christiana edition, p. v.

‡ Cc. vi, vii.

shire of Namdalen.* As the author can scarcely have been much more than a layman in the fields of mathematics and astronomy, the agreement as to results obtained is quite remarkable.

The problem of place is relatively unimportant, but the question of the date of composition has more than mere literary interest. There is nothing in the work itself which gives any clue to the year when it was begun or completed. It seems evident, however, that it was written after the period of the civil wars, though while the terrors of that century of conflicts were yet fresh in the memories of men. For various other reasons, too, it is clear that the *King's Mirror* was composed in the thirteenth century and more specifically during the reign of Hakon IV.

The allusion to the Byzantine emperor Manuel Comnenus,† whose reign began in 1143, gives a definite date from which any discussion of this problem must begin. It is also clear that the work was written after the church had begun to lay claim to power in the government of the state, which was in 1163.‡ The author looks back to an evil time when minorities were frequent and joint kingships were the rule; § but the period of joint rule virtually came to a close in 1184 when Sverre became sole king; and the last boy king whom the author can have taken into account was Hakon IV, who was thirteen years old when he was given the royal title. It therefore seems evident that the *King's Mirror* was written after 1217, the year of Hakon's accession.

* "Om Stedet for Kongespeilets Forfattelse": *Arkiv for nordisk Filologi*, I, 205-208.

† C. viii.

‡ See above, p. 36.

§ See above, pp. 33-35.

On the other hand, it is also quite evident that the treatise can not have been written after the great revision of the Norwegian laws which was carried out during the reign of Magnus Lawmender. The new court-law, which was promulgated about 1275, is clearly later than the *Speculum Regale*: the fine exacted for the death of a king's thegn, which is given as forty marks in the *King's Mirror*, is fixed at a little more than thirteen marks in Magnus' legislation. In 1273 the law regulating the succession to the throne made impossible the recurrence of joint kingships; but the principle of this arrangement appears to have been accepted as early as 1260, when the king's son Magnus was given the royal title. Another decree, apparently also from Hakon's reign, which abolished the responsibility of kinsmen in cases of manslaughter and deprived the relatives of the one who was slain of their share in the blood fine, also runs counter to methods described in the *King's Mirror*, which states distinctly that kinsmen share in the payment.* It is therefore safe to conclude that the work was written some time between 1217 and 1260.

The earliest attempt to date the *King's Mirror* was made by the learned Iclander, Hans Finsen. In an essay included in the Sorö edition (1768) he fixes the time at about 1164.† J. Erichsen, who wrote the introduction to this edition, doubts that it was composed at so early a date; impressed with the fact that the work reflects the political views of the Birchshank faction, he is inclined to place the date of composition some time in Sverre's reign or in the last decade of the twelfth

* C. xxxvi (p. 201).

† See page xx of the Sorö edition.

century.* The striking resemblance between the ideas expressed in the treatise and the guiding principles of Sverre's regime led the editors of the Christiania edition to the same conclusion: 1196 or soon after.† And so it was held that the work is a twelfth century document until a Danish artillery officer, Captain Otto Blom, began to make a careful study of the various types of weapons, armor, and siege engines mentioned in the work. His conclusion, published in 1867, was that the *King's Mirror* reflects the military art of the thirteenth century and that the manuscript was composed in the latter half of the century, at any rate not long before 1260.‡ This conclusion has been accepted by Gustav Storm,§ Ludvig Daae,|| and virtually all who have written on the subject since Blom's study appeared, except Heffermehl, whose belief that Ivar Bodde was the author could not permit so late a date, as Ivar, who was a man of prominence at Sverre's court about 1200, must have been an exceedingly aged man, if he were still living in 1260. Heffermehl is, therefore, compelled to force the date of composition back to the decade 1230-1240.

The weakness of Captain Blom's argument is that he supposes the military art described in the *Speculum Regale* to be the military art of the North at the time when the work was written. If all the engines and accoutrements that the author describes ever came into use in the North, it was long after 1260. Nearly all the

* See pages lxx-lxvi of the Sorö edition. † Christiania edition, p. viii.

‡ *Aarböger for nordisk Oldkyndighed*, 1867, 65-109. See above, p. 32.

§ *Arkiv for nordisk Filologi*, III, 83-88.

|| *Aarböger for nordisk Oldkyndighed*, 1896, 176-177.

weapons and devices mentioned were in use in southern Europe and in the Orient in earlier decades of the thirteenth century; some of them belong to much earlier times. If certain engines and devices which Captain Blom is disposed to regard as mythical are left out of account, it will be found that only three items fail to appear in illustrations from the earlier part of the thirteenth century; and it would not be safe to assume that these were not in use because no drawing of them has been found.

Viewed against the background of Norwegian history, those chapters of the *King's Mirror* which deal with the nature and the rights of monarchy and with the place of the church in the state take on the appearance of a political pamphlet written to defend and justify the doings of the Birchshank party. The motives for composing an apology of this sort may be found at almost any time in the thirteenth century but especially during the decade that closed with the coronation of Hakon IV. It will be remembered that the author of the *King's Mirror* discusses the calamities that may befall a kingdom as a result of joint rule.* But in 1235, after one of Earl Skule's periodic attempts at rebellion, his royal son-in-law granted him the administration of one-third of the realm. The grant was ratified the next year with certain changes: instead of a definite, compact fief the earl now received territories everywhere in the kingdom. In 1237 Skule was given the ducal title and to many men it seemed as if the curse of joint kingship was about to afflict the land once more. Two years later the partisans

* C. xxxvi.

of the duke proclaimed him king: like Adonijah of old he tried to displace the Lord's anointed.* But after a few months came the surprise of Skule's forces in Trondhjem and the duke's own tragic end in Elgesæter convent.† It will be recalled that the author defends King Solomon's dealings with Joab and lays down the principle that the right of sanctuary will not hold against a king.‡ The rebellion of the Norwegian Adonijah was in 1239; he died the death of Joab in 1240. Three years later the believers in a strong monarchy were disturbed by the news that the bishops had revived the old claim to supremacy in the state. Soon after this series of events the political chapters of the *King's Mirror* must have been composed.

In 1247, the year of Hakon's coronation, the hierarchy was once more reconciled to the monarchy, and nothing more is heard of ecclesiastical pretensions during the remainder of the reign. It would seem that after this reconciliation, no churchman, at least not one of the younger generation, would care to send such a challenge as the *King's Mirror* out into the world. One of the older men, one who had suffered with Sverre and his impoverished Birchshanks, might have wished to write such a work even after 1247; but after that date the surviving followers of the eloquent king must have been very few indeed, seeing that Sverre had now lain forty-five years in the grave. It is therefore the writer's opinion, though it cannot be regarded as a demonstrated fact, that the closing chapters of the *King's Mirror* were written after 1240, the year when Duke Skule was slain, perhaps after

* C. lxvi.

† See above, p. 48.

‡ C. lxix.

1243, in which year Norwegian clericalism reasserted itself, but some time before 1247, the year of Hakon's coronation and final reconciliation with the church.

In the centuries following its composition the *King's Mirror* appears to have had wide currency in the North. When the editors of the Sorö edition began to search for manuscripts, they found a considerable number, though chiefly fragments, in Norway and Iceland; and traces of the work were also found in Sweden.* Thus far twenty-five manuscripts have come to light; "some of them are extensive, but many are fragments of only a few leaves."† Copies of the work were made as late as the reformation period and even later.

The first mention of the *Speculum Regale* in any printed work is in Peder Claussön's "Description of Norway,"‡ the manuscript of which dates from the earlier years of the seventeenth century. But more than one hundred years were still to pass before this important work was brought to the attention of the literary world. Early in the eighteenth century, however, great interest began to be shown in the records of the Old Northern past. The great Icelandic scholar and antiquarian, Arne Magnussen, had begun to collect manuscripts and was laying the foundation of the Arnamagnean collection, which is one of the treasures of the Danish cap-

* See the Sorö edition, pp. xxix-xxxvii.

† *Konungs Skuggsjá* (ed. G. T. Flom), p. i. Among the fragments is a part of a Latin paraphrase made in Sweden in the first half of the fourteenth century. The translator was a cleric in the service of the Duchess Ingeborg, a daughter of the Norwegian King Hakon V. Ingeborg was married to the Swedish Duke Erik. *Arkiv for nordisk Filologi*, I, 110-112.

‡ *Norrigns Beskriffuelse*. See *Aarbøger for nordisk Oldkyndighed*, 1896, 172 (Daae).

ital. Among other things he found several copies and fragments of manuscripts of the *Speculum Regale*. No effort was made to publish any of these before the middle of the century was past; but about 1760 three young scholars began to plan editions of this famous work. The first to undertake this task was Professor Gerhard Schöning,* a Norwegian by birth, who was at the time rector of the Latin school in Trondhjem but later held a professorship in the Danish academy at Sorö. Schöning began the preparation of a Latin translation of the work, which he planned to publish along with the original version; but his work was never completed. About the same time an Icelandic student at the University of Copenhagen, Hans Finsen,† later bishop in his native island, projected an edition, but was unable to carry out his plans for want of a publisher, and turned his materials over to others. The third and only successful attempt at publication was made on the suggestion of a recently organized association of Icelandic scholars known as "the Invisible" society. This association requested Halfdan Einersen,‡ rector of the Latin school at Holar, one of the members and founders of the "invisible" body, to prepare an edition. An Icelandic merchant, Sören Pens, generously offered to bear all the expense of publication.§

Rector Einersen prepared the text from the best available Icelandic manuscripts. He also made a Danish

* Schöning's dates are 1722-1780. He was professor of Latin literature and history at Sorö, but his real achievements lie in the field of Norwegian history.

† 1739-1796.

‡ 1732-1785.

§ See the introduction to the Sorö edition, xxv-xxviii, from which the above facts have been culled.

translation and a Latin paraphrase of the same and forwarded the whole to Denmark to be published. The materials were given into the editorial charge of another learned Icelfander, Jon Erichsen, teacher of jurisprudence at Sorö Academy. Although Jon Erichsen's name does not appear on the title page, it is quite clear that the general excellence of the work is in large measure due to his careful collation of Einersen's text with manuscripts to which the Icelandic rector had not had access. Professor Erichsen discarded Einersen's Danish translation and prepared one of his own. He also found place in the volume for a dissertation by Hans Finsen, which was first published in 1766, and in which the learned theologian discusses various literary problems, such as the authorship of the work, the date of composition, and the like. All these materials were brought together and published at Sorö in 1768. On the whole the Sorö edition is an excellent piece of work. The Icelandic text was made with great care and reveals the fact that the editors were possessed of a critical insight which for the time was remarkable. The Danish translation is somewhat stiff and literal and does not always follow the laws of Danish syntax; but it is generally accurate and retains an unmistakable flavor of the Old Norse original.

Except for some assistance rendered by Professor Schöning, the first edition of the *King's Mirror* was the work of Icelanders. The Norwegians were also beginning to show some interest in their medieval past; but Norway was still a part of the Danish monarchy, the political and intellectual center of which was Co-

penhagen, and for half a century longer the Norwegians were unable to do anything to promote the publication of historical materials. However, four years after the Sorö edition had come from the press, a society of Norsemen at the University of Copenhagen was organized, the purpose of which was to further the cause of Norwegian autonomy. After Norway in 1814 resumed her place among the nations of Europe, it was only natural that Norwegian scholars should be attracted to the Old Norse treasures of the middle ages. So far as the means of the impoverished state would allow, publication of the sources of Norwegian history was undertaken. The first Norwegian historian of distinction was Rudolf Keyser, professor in the University of Christiania. In his efforts to draw the attention of his countrymen to the glories of earlier centuries, he was soon reënforced by his younger contemporary, the fiery and industrious scholar and investigator Peter Andreas Munch, who, though his work is somewhat marred by the fervor of his patriotism, has not yet found a superior among the historians of the North. Soon a third was added to these two: Carl R. Unger, a man of remarkable abilities as a linguist. These three now undertook to edit a series of Old Norse texts, among which was the *King's Mirror*, which was published under the auspices of the University of Christiania in 1848.

The Christiania edition is based on the main manuscript of the *Speculum Regale*, the manuscript 243 B of the Arnamagnean collection. This was produced in Norway some time during the last quarter of the thirteenth

century, perhaps not long after 1275.* As the manuscript was incomplete in part, the editors also made use of the copies which had been made the basis of the earlier edition. Inasmuch as the materials to be used had been copied at different times and consequently reflected various stages of linguistic development, it was thought desirable to normalize the orthography: and in this part of their task the editors made use of a fragment which was thought to belong to a somewhat earlier date than the main manuscript.† If this belief is correct, the Christiania edition must, in respect to orthography, be a comparatively close approximation of the original manuscript.

In 1881 a third edition prepared by the German philologist Otto Brenner was published under the title *Speculum Regale, ein altnorwegischer Dialog*. Brenner based his text on the Norwegian manuscript 243 B, but he also made use of the Icelandic copy (243 A) and of some of the older fragments. His edition consequently includes all the materials that had been used in the earlier editions. It was Brenner's purpose to prepare a text which should give the Norwegian version in its original form, so far as such a restoration is possible. Though scholars are not agreed that Brenner achieved his purpose, all have acknowledged the value of his work, and since its publication his version has been regarded as the standard edition.

Two years ago (1915) the University of Illinois published, under the editorial direction of Professor George

* See Flom's edition of *Konungs Skuggsjá*, introduction.

† See the Christiania edition, pp. xiii-xvi.

T. Flom, a photographic reproduction of this same manuscript, 243 B. This important linguistic monument has thus been made accessible to scholars in its original form. Professor Flom has also prepared the Old Norse text of the manuscript, which makes a part of the publication, and has prefaced the whole with an extended introduction in which he discusses the history of the manuscript, marginal addenda, abbreviations, and other paleographic and linguistic problems.

Until very recently the Danish version prepared by Jon Erichsen for the Sorö edition was the only translation of the *Speculum Regale* into a modern language.* But a few years ago the first part of the work was published under the title *Kongespegelen* in the form of a translation into New Norse, a language of recent origin based on the spoken dialects of Norway. As these dialects are closely related to the original idiom of the North, such a translation can be made with comparative ease. The work has recently been completed, and in most respects the New Norse version proves to be a very satisfactory translation.

Some years ago a number of American scholars who have interests in the fields of Scandinavian history, language, and literature united to form a Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Study. The founders believed that the purpose of the organization might be in part achieved by encouraging the publication of some of the great Scandinavian classics in English translation. It was on the suggestion of this Society that the

* In 1892 a small volume of extracts from the *King's Mirror* translated by Chr. Dorph was published in Copenhagen.

writer undertook to prepare the present version of the *King's Mirror*. The translation is based on the text of the Christiania edition, the readings of which have been consistently followed, except in a few instances where the scribe does not seem to have copied his manuscript correctly; in such cases the most satisfactory variant readings have been followed.

I

INTRODUCTION: NAME AND PURPOSE OF THE WORK

I PASSED all the crafts before my mind's eye and studied intently all the practices belonging to each craft; and I saw a vast multitude walking wearily along the paths that slope downward from the highways of virtue into error and vice. Some of these were very steep, and those who followed them perished in desolate ravines; for the long, wearisome road had fatigued them, and they had not enough strength left to climb up the hillside, nor were they able to find the by-paths that led back to the highways of virtue.

The destruction of this multitude was due, it seemed to me, to various causes: some perished through ignorance, for the ways of error were trodden so generally that they appeared to be the most convenient to follow, and ignorant men mistook them for highways, since the majority seemed to walk in them; some perished because of laziness and carelessness; others feared that they would suffer derision and contumely, if they walked the highroad alone; while still others were led astray by perversity, wickedness, and the various passions.

But when I had observed how good morals were scorned and how the scornors perished, I began to wonder how to find a road where I should not be traveling entirely alone and yet would not have to choose one of those paths where the crowd were exhausting their

strength, lest the steep climb should weary me, if I were to make an effort to get back up again.

Inasmuch as my father was still living and loved me well, I thought it would be better to seek his counsel than after a slight consideration to reach a decision which might displease him. So I hastened to my father and laid the whole problem before him. He was a wise and kind man, and I found that he was pleased when he heard that my errand was to learn right conduct. He permitted me to ask whatever I wished about the practices of the various crafts, and how they differed. He also promised to make known to me all the usages that are most properly observed by each craft that I might ask about. He further promised to point out, as a warning, the paths of error which most men enter upon when they leave the highways of virtue. Finally he promised to show me the by-paths that those may take who wish to return from wrong roads to the highway.

Thereupon I began my inquiry by asking about the activities of merchants and their methods. At the close of the first discussion, when my questions had all been answered, I became bolder in speech and mounted to a higher point in our review of the conditions of men; for next I began to inquire into the customs of kings and other princes and of the men who follow and serve them. Nor did I wholly omit to ask about the doings of the clergy and their mode of life. And I closed by inquiring into the activities of the peasants and husbandmen, who till the soil, and into their habits and occupation.

But when my father had given wise and sufficient replies to all the questions that I had asked, certain wise

and worthy men, who, being present, had heard my questions and his wise and truthful answers, requested me to note down all our conversations and set them in a book, so that our discussions should not perish as soon as we ceased speaking, but prove useful and enjoyable to many who could derive no pastime from us who were present at these conversations.

So I did as they advised and requested. I searched my memory and pondered deeply upon the speeches and set them all in a book, not only for the amusement or the fleeting pastime of those who may hear them, but for the help which the book will offer in many ways to all who read it with proper attention and observe carefully everything that it prescribes. It is written in such a way as to furnish information and entertainment, as well as much practical knowledge, if the contents are carefully learned and remembered. But whoever has clear and proper insight will realize that, if a book is to develop these subjects fully, it will have to be a much larger work than this one.

The book has been given a handsome title: it is called *Speculum Regale*, not because of pride in him who wrote it, but because the title ought to make those who hear it more eager to know the work itself; and for this reason, too, that if any one wishes to be informed as to proper conduct, courtesy, or comely and precise forms of speech, he will find and see these therein along with many illustrations and all manner of patterns, as in a bright mirror. And it is called *King's Mirror*, because in it one may read of the manners of kings as well as of other men. A king, moreover, holds the highest title and

ought, with his court and all his servants, to observe the most proper customs, so that in them his subjects may see good examples of proper conduct, uprightness, and all other courtly virtues. Besides, every king should look frequently into this mirror and observe first his own conduct and next that of the men who are subject to him. He should reward all whose conduct is good, but should discipline and compel those to observe good morals who cannot learn without threats. Although the book is first and foremost a king's mirror, yet it is intended for every one as a common possession; since whoever wishes is free to look into it and to seek information, as he may desire, about his own conduct, or any other type of manners which he may find discussed in the book. And I believe that no man will be considered unwise or unmannerly who carefully observes everything that he finds in this work which is suited to his mode of living, no matter what his rank or title may be.

If any one desires or is curious to hear or study this book, he need not inquire about the name or the standing of the man who composed and wrote it, lest perchance he should reject what may be found useful in it because of contempt, envy, or hostile feeling of some sort for the author.*

* It seems probable that the form in which the author of the *Speculum* expresses his desire to remain anonymous shows the influence of the Old Norse version of the *Elucidarium*, a theological discussion in dialog form, which dates from the twelfth century and is ascribed to Honorius of Autun. The author of the *Elucidarium* writes as follows in his preface: "My name, however, I have purposely withheld, lest wicked men should be prompted by a feeling of envy to cast aside a useful work." For the original Latin preface to the *Elucidarium* see Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, CLXXII, 1110; the Old Norse version is given in *Annaler for nordisk Oldkyndighed*, 1857, p. 240, 1858, p. 24.

This request, however, which surely may be granted to any man, we should like to make: we ask all good men who hear this book to give it careful thought and study; and if there should be aught which seems necessary to the work but has not been included, whether concerning morals and conduct or discreet and proper forms of speech, let them insert it in proper form and connection. And if they find any matters which seem to impair the work or to have been discussed at too great length, let them discreetly remove all such and thus, amending our ignorance in kindness, help our work to be appreciated in proper spirit. For it was not pride that impelled us to labor but good-will toward all who seemed to need and desire knowledge of this sort.

When I went to my father with these inquiries that I have now mentioned, I learned in the very first words that I addressed to him, how every one ought to salute or address one's father.

II

“THE FEAR OF THE LORD IS THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM”

Son. Good day,* sire! I have come to see you as it behooves a humble and obedient son to approach a loving and renowned father; and I pray you to listen with patience to the questions that I have in mind to ask and kindly to vouchsafe an answer to each one.

Father. Inasmuch as you are my only son, I am pleased to have you come often to see me, for there are many subjects which we ought to discuss. I shall be glad to

* Good day (*God dag*) is still the common form of greeting among Norwegians and other Scandinavians.

hear what you wish to inquire about and to answer such questions as are discreetly asked.

Son. I have heard the common report (which I believe is true) as to your wisdom, that in all the land it would be difficult to find a man who has greater insight into every form of knowledge than you have; for all those who have difficult matters to settle are eager to get your decision. I have also been told that the same was true when you were at the royal court, and that the entire government, lawmaking, treaty making, and every other sort of business, seemed to be guided by your opinion. Now as I am the lawful heir to your worldly possessions, I should also like to share somewhat in the heritage of your wisdom. Wherefore I wish to have you point out to me the beginnings and the alphabet of wisdom, as far as I am able to learn them from you, so that I may later be able to read all your learned writings, and thus follow in your footsteps. For I am sure that after your decease many will rely on your having trained me after your own ways.

Father. It pleases me to hear you speak in this wise, and I shall be glad to answer; for it is a great comfort to me that I shall leave much wealth for my own true son to enjoy after my days; but I should scarcely regard him as a son, though I had begotten him, if he were a fool. Now if you seek understanding, I will show you the basis and the beginning of all wisdom, as a great and wise man once expressed it: to fear Almighty God, this is the beginning of wisdom.* But He is not to be feared as an

* *Proverbs*, ix, 10. In the use of Scriptural quotations the author is seldom accurate.

enemy, but rather with the fear of love, as the Son of God taught the man who asked him what the substance of the law was. For the Son of God referred him to the Scripture that reads as follows: Thou shalt love God with all thy heart and with all thy strength and with all thy might.* Now one should love God above everything else and fear Him at all times when evil desires arise; he should banish evil longings for God's sake, though he were bold enough to cherish them for men's sake. Now if you wish to know what are the beginnings and the first steps in the pursuit of wisdom, this is the true beginning, and there is none other. And whoever learns this and observes it shall not be wanting in true knowledge or in any form of goodness.

Son. This is indeed loving counsel, such as one might expect from you; besides, it is good and easily learned by every one whom fortune follows. Still, if one is to be reputed a wise man, it will surely be necessary to take up many things that pertain to the various crafts.

Father. This is the beginning and the alphabet of every good thing. But through the alphabet one learns to read books, and in the same way it is always better the more crafts are added to this art. For through the crafts a man gains wisdom whatever the calling that he intends to follow, whether that of kingsman,† yeoman, or merchant.

* *St. Luke*, x, 27.

† A "kingsman" (*konungsmaðr*) was any one who had formally entered into the king's personal service, whether he was actually employed at court or not. See below, cc. xxiv ff.

III

THE ACTIVITIES AND HABITS OF A MERCHANT

Son. I am now in my most vigorous years and have a desire to travel abroad; for I would not venture to seek employment at court before I had observed the customs of other men. Such is my intention at present, unless you should give me other advice.

Father. Although I have been a kingsman rather than a merchant, I have no fault to find with that calling, for often the best of men are chosen for it. But much depends on whether the man is more like those who are true merchants, or those who take the merchant's name but are mere frauds and foisterers, buying and selling wrongfully.

Son. It would be more seemly for me to be like the rightful ones; for it would be worse than one might think likely, if your son were to imitate those who are not as they ought. But whatever my fate is to be, I desire to have you inform me as to the practices of such men as seem to be capable in that business.

Father. The man who is to be a trader will have to brave many perils, sometimes at sea and sometimes in heathen lands,* but nearly always among alien peoples; and it must be his constant purpose to act discreetly wherever he happens to be. On the sea he must be alert and fearless.

* These "heathen lands" were probably the regions along the Arctic inhabited by the Finns; it is also possible that the author alludes to trading voyages to lands occupied by Esquimaux, though he makes no mention of these people anywhere in his work.

When you are in a market town, or wherever you are, be polite and agreeable; then you will secure the friendship of all good men. Make it a habit to rise early in the morning, and go first and immediately to church wherever it seems most convenient to hear the canonical hours, and hear all the hours and mass from matins on. Join in the worship, repeating such psalms and prayers as you have learned. When the services are over, go out to look after your business affairs. If you are unacquainted with the traffic of the town, observe carefully how those who are reputed the best and most prominent merchants conduct their business. You must also be careful to examine the wares that you buy before the purchase is finally made to make sure that they are sound and flawless. And whenever you make a purchase, call in a few trusty men to serve as witnesses as to how the bargain was made.

You should keep occupied with your business till breakfast or, if necessity demands it, till midday; after that you should eat your meal. Keep your table well provided and set with a white cloth, clean victuals, and good drinks. Serve enjoyable meals, if you can afford it. After the meal you may either take a nap or stroll about a little while for pastime and to see what other good merchants are employed with, or whether any new wares have come to the borough which you ought to buy. On returning to your lodgings examine your wares, lest they suffer damage after coming into your hands. If they are found to be injured and you are about to dispose of them, do not conceal the flaws from the purchaser: show him what the defects are and make such a bargain as you

can; then you cannot be called a deceiver. Also put a good price on your wares, though not too high, and yet very near what you see can be obtained; then you cannot be called a foister.

Finally, remember this, that whenever you have an hour to spare you should give thought to your studies, especially to the law books; for it is clear that those who gain knowledge from books have keener wits than others, since those who are the most learned have the best proofs for their knowledge. Make a study of all the laws, but while you remain a merchant there is no law that you will need to know more thoroughly than the Bjarkey code.* If you are acquainted with the law, you will not be annoyed by quibbles when you have suits to bring against men of your own class, but will be able to plead according to law in every case.

But although I have most to say about laws, I regard no man perfect in knowledge unless he has thoroughly learned and mastered the customs of the place where he is sojourning. And if you wish to become perfect in knowledge, you must learn all the languages, first of all Latin and French, for these idioms are most widely used; and yet, do not neglect your native tongue or speech.

IV

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED

Son. May God reward you, sire, for the love of kinship that you show in pointing out so many things that I may find needful, — if I have the good fortune to learn

* The "Birch-isle" code was originally a set of rules governing commercial intercourse. After a time it became a more elaborate law governing the munici-

them and to remember them after they are learned. And if you think there are any other important matters that ought to be taken up in this discussion, I shall be glad to listen attentively.

Father. There are, indeed, certain matters which should not be omitted from this discourse, but they can be stated in a few words, if that seems best. Train yourself to be as active as possible, though not so as to injure your health. Strive never to be downcast, for a downcast mind is always morbid; try rather to be friendly and genial at all times, of an even temper and never moody. Be upright and teach the right to every man who wishes to learn from you; and always associate with the best men. Guard your tongue carefully; this is good counsel, for your tongue may honor you, but it may also condemn you. Though you be angry speak few words and never in passion; for unless one is careful, he may utter words in wrath that he would later give gold to have unspoken. On the whole, I know of no revenge, though many employ it, that profits a man less than to bandy heated words with another, even though he has a quarrel to settle with him. You shall know of a truth that no virtue is higher or stronger than the power to keep one's tongue from foul or profane speech, tattling, or slanderous talk in any form. If children be given to you, let them not grow up without learning a trade; for we may expect a man to keep closer to knowledge and business

pality as well as the traders who were more or less permanently located there. It is believed that the name is derived from Birka, a trading center in eastern Sweden not far from the site of modern Stockholm. The "Birch-Isle" code is published in *Norges Gamle Love*, I, part iii, 303-336.

when he comes of age, if he is trained in youth while under control.

And further, there are certain things which you must beware of and shun like the devil himself: these are drinking, chess, harlots, quarreling, and throwing dice for stakes. For upon such foundations the greatest calamities are built; and unless they strive to avoid these things, few only are able to live long without blame or sin.

Observe carefully how the sky is lighted, the course of the heavenly bodies, the grouping of the hours, and the points of the horizon. Learn also how to mark the movements of the ocean and to discern how its turmoil ebbs and swells; for that is knowledge which all must possess who wish to trade abroad. Learn arithmetic thoroughly, for merchants have great need of that.

If you come to a place where the king or some other chief who is in authority has his officials, seek to win their friendship; and if they demand any necessary fees on the ruler's behalf, be prompt to render all such payments, lest by holding too tightly to little things you lose the greater. Also beware lest the king's belongings find their way into your purse; for you cannot know but that he may be covetous who has those things in charge, and it is easier to be cautious beforehand than to crave pardon afterwards. If you can dispose of your wares at suitable prices, do not hold them long; for it is the wont of merchants to buy constantly and to sell rapidly.

If you are preparing to carry on trade beyond the seas and you sail your own ship, have it thoroughly coated with tar in the autumn and, if possible, keep it

tarred all winter. But if the ship is placed on timbers too late to be coated in the fall, tar it when spring opens and let it dry thoroughly afterwards. Always buy shares in good vessels or in none at all. Keep your ship attractive, for then capable men will join you and it will be well manned. Be sure to have your ship ready when summer begins and do your traveling while the season is best. Keep reliable tackle on shipboard at all times, and never remain out at sea in late autumn, if you can avoid it. If you attend carefully to all these things, with God's mercy you may hope for success. This, too, you must keep constantly in mind, if you wish to be counted a wise man, that you ought never to let a day pass without learning something that will profit you. Be not like those who think it beneath their dignity to hear or learn from others such things even as might avail them much if they knew them. For a man must regard it as great an honor to learn as to teach, if he wishes to be considered thoroughly informed.

There remain a few minor matters that ought to be mentioned. Whenever you travel at sea, keep on board two or three hundred ells of wadmal of a sort suitable for mending sails, if that should be necessary, a large number of needles, and a supply of thread and cord. It may seem trivial to mention these things, but it is often necessary to have them on hand. You will always need to carry a supply of nails, both spikes and rivets, of such sizes as your ship demands; also good boat hooks and broadaxes, gouges and augers, and all such other tools as ship carpenters make use of. All these things that I have now named you must remember to carry with you

on shipboard, whenever you sail on a trading voyage and the ship is your own. When you come to a market town where you expect to tarry, seek lodgings from the innkeeper who is reputed the most discreet and the most popular among both kingsmen and boroughmen. Always buy good clothes and eat good fare if your means permit; and never keep unruly or quarrelsome men as attendants or messmates. Keep your temper calm though not to the point of suffering abuse or bringing upon yourself the reproach of cowardice. Though necessity may force you into strife, be not in a hurry to take revenge; first make sure that your effort will succeed and strike where it ought. Never display a heated temper when you see that you are likely to fail, but be sure to maintain your honor at some later time, unless your opponent should offer a satisfactory atonement.

If your wealth takes on rapid growth, divide it and invest it in a partnership trade in fields where you do not yourself travel; but be cautious in selecting partners. Always let Almighty God, the holy Virgin Mary, and the saint whom you have most frequently called upon to intercede for you be counted among your partners. Watch with care over the property which the saints are to share with you and always bring it faithfully to the place to which it was originally promised.

If you have much capital invested in trade, divide it into three parts: put one-third into partnerships with men who are permanently located in market boroughs, are trustworthy, and are experienced in business. Place the other two parts in various business ventures; for if your capital is invested in different places, it is not likely

that you will suffer losses in all your wealth at one time: more likely it will be secure in some localities, though frequent losses be suffered. But if you find that the profits of trade bring a decided increase to your funds, draw out the two-thirds and invest them in good farm land, for such property is generally thought the most secure, whether the enjoyment of it falls to one's self or to one's kinsmen. With the remaining third you may do as seems best, — continue to keep it in business or place it all in land. However, though you decide to keep your funds invested in trade, discontinue your own journeys at sea or as a trader in foreign fields, as soon as your means have attained sufficient growth and you have studied foreign customs as much as you like. Keep all that you see in careful memory, the evil with the good; remember evil practices as a warning, and the good customs as useful to yourself and to others who may wish to learn from you.

V

THE SUN AND THE WINDS

Son. It is evident that whoever wishes to become informed on such matters as those which you have now discussed must first try to determine what is most worth learning and afterwards to keep in mind all that he has heard. But in your discussion just recently you mentioned several things the nature of which I do not understand, though I have reflected upon your statements, namely, the lights of the sky and the movements of the ocean. Moreover, you urged me to learn these things and stated that there is knowledge in learning them. But

I cannot comprehend them unless I shall hear them explained; and I know of no other wise master with so kind a will to teach me these matters as yourself. Therefore, with your permission, I will ask you to continue this discussion, so that I may become somewhat better informed on these subjects: how the lights of the sky and the course of the heavenly bodies wax and wane; how the time of the day is told and the hours are grouped; but especially how the ocean moves and what causes its restlessness. For sometimes the ocean appears so blithe and cheerful that one would like to sport with it through an entire season; but soon it displays such fierce wrath and ill-nature that the life and property of those who have anything to do with it are endangered. Now I have thought that, although the sun completes its course according to an established law, that fact cannot produce the unquiet of the sea. If you are disposed to explain these things further, I shall listen gladly and attentively.

Father. I can indeed give such an explanation, just as I have heard it from the lips of well-informed men, and as seems most reasonable according to the insight that God has given me. The sun has received divers offices: for it brings light and warmth to all the earth, and the various parts of the world rejoice in its approaching; but its course is planned in such a way that it sometimes withdraws from those regions that it approaches at other times. When it first comes to visit the east with warmth and bright beams, the day begins to lift up silvery brows and a pleasant face to the east wind. Soon the east wind is crowned with a golden glory and robed in all his raiments of joy. He eases griefs and regretful sighs and

turns a bright countenance toward his neighbors on either side, bidding them rejoice with him in his delight and cast away their winterlike sorrows. He also sends blazing rays into the face of the west wind to inform him of his joy and happiness. He advises the west wind, too, that in the evening he shall be clad in garments similar to those which the east wind wore in the morning. Later in the day and at the proper hour the southeast wind displays the glory of his newly-gotten robes and sends warming rays with friendly messages into the face of the northwest wind. But at midday the south wind reveals how he has been endowed with riches of heat, sends warm gifts of friendship across to the north wind, warms his cool face, and invites all the neighboring winds to share in the abundance of his wealth. As the day declines the southwest wind with glad face receives the gentle sheen and genial beams. Having put away wrath, he reveals his desire for peace and concord; he commands the mighty billows and steep wave-crests to subside with waning power and calls forth quickening dews in a wish to be fully reconciled with all his neighbors. Gently he blows a refreshing breath into the face of the northeast wind, warms his wind-chilled lips, and thaws his frosty brow and frozen cheeks. But when evening begins, the west wind, clad in splendor and sunset beauty as if robed for a festal eve, lifts a gleaming brow above a blithe countenance, and sends a message on darting beams across to the east wind telling him to prepare for the festive morrow to come.

At sunset the northwest wind begins to raise his fair brows and with lifted eyelids betokens to all his neigh-

bors that the dazzling radiance is now in his keeping. Thereupon he sends forth a shadow over the face of the earth proclaiming to all that now come the hours of rest after the toil of day. But at midnight the north wind goes forth to meet the coursing sun and leads him through rocky deserts toward the sparse-built shores. He calls forth heavy shadows, covers his face with a broad-brimmed helmet, and informs all that he is arrayed for the night watch to keep guard over his neighbors that they may have comfort and untroubled rest after the heat of day. With cool lips he gently blows upon the face of the south wind, that he may be better able to resist the violent heat of the coming day. He also scatters the dark clouds and clears up the face of heaven in order that the sun, when light appears, may be easily able to send forth his warm and radiant beams in all directions. But on the coming of morn the north-east wind begins to open his closed eyelids and blinks to both sides as if to determine whether it is time to rise. Then he opens quickly his clear eyes as if sated with sleep after ended rest. Soon he leads forth the gleaming day into all the homesteads like a fair youth and fitting herald, to give sure knowledge that the radiant sphere and shining sun follows close behind and to command all to be arrayed for his coming. Soon the sun rises and shoots forth his beams in all directions to watch over the covenant made by the winds; and after that he goes on through his ordained course as we have already told.

When peace has been established among these chiefs that we have just named, it is safe to travel wherever you may wish through the realms of any one of them.

Then the sea begins to bar out all violent storms and make smooth highways where earlier the route was impassable because of broad billows and mighty waves; and the shores offer harbors in many places which formerly gave no shelter. Now, while this covenant holds, there will be fair sailing for you or any others who wish to travel to foreign shores or steer their ships over the perils of the ocean. It is, therefore, the duty of every man, indeed it is a necessary one, to learn thoroughly when one may look for dangerous seasons and bad routes, or when times come when one may risk everything. For even unwitting beasts observe the seasons, though by instinct, since they have no intellect. Even the fishes, though lacking human insight, know how to find security in the deep seas, while the winter storms are most violent; but when winter wanes, they move nearer the shores and find enjoyment as after a sorrow suffered and past. Later in the spring after the roe has come, they lay the spawn and bring forth a vast multitude of young fishes and in this way increase their race, each after its kind and class. It does, indeed, show great forethought for unintelligent creatures to provide so carefully against the coming winter storms, and to bring forth their offspring at the opening of spring, so that they may enjoy the calm weather of summer and search for food in peace and quiet along the wide shores; for thus they gather strength enough in summer against the ensuing winter to sustain themselves among other fishes in the chilly deep.

The covenant brings joy to the sky as well as to the sea; for as spring advances the birds soaring high into

the air rejoice with beautiful songs in the newly made treaty of these lords as in a coming festival. Their joy is as great as if they have escaped great and terrible dangers which might arise from the strife of these chieftains. Soon they build nests upon the earth and lead birdlings forth from them, each after its kind. Thus they increase their species and care for their young in the summer that these may be able to find their own sustenance in the winter following. Even the earth rejoices in this peace-making, for as soon as the sun begins to pour out its warming rays over the face of the earth, the ice begins to thaw around the frozen grass roots; soon fragrant and fair-hued herbs sprout forth, and the earth shows that she finds gladness and festive joy in the fresh beauty of her emerald robes. She gladly offers to all her offspring the sustenance which she had to refuse them earlier because of the dearth in winter. The trees that stood with dripping branches and frozen roots put forth green leaves, thus showing their joy that the sorrow and distress of winter are past.

Unclean and repulsive beasts display insight and understanding in their ability to determine the proper time to increase their kind and to come out of their dens. They also observe the season when it is necessary to flee the cold and stormy distress of winter and seek shelter under rocks, in large crags, or in the deep scar of the landslide till the time to come forth is at hand. Wild beasts that seek their food in woods or on the mountains know well how to discern the seasons; for they bear the begotten offspring while winter is most severe, so that they may bring forth their young when the grass is

fresh and the summer is warm. There is a little creeping thing called the ant, which can teach thoughtful men much practical wisdom, whether they be merchants or husbandmen, kings or lesser men. It teaches kings how to build castles and fortresses; in the same way it teaches the merchants and the husbandmen with what industry and at what seasons they ought to pursue their callings; for he who has proper insight and observes carefully the activities of the ant will note many things and derive much profit from them. All other creatures, too, whether clean or unclean, rejoice in this season, and with vigilant eyes seek their food in the warm summer time so as to be able to endure more confidently the perils of a destitute winter season. Now it is this covenant between these eight winds that calls forth all the delights of earth and sky and the calm stirring of the sea according to the command and mysterious skill of Him Who ordained in the beginning that thus should all nature remain until He should change the order of things. Now if you feel that some of these matters have not yet been fully cleared up, you may continue your inquiries and ask what questions you like.

VI

THE TIDES AND THE CHANGES IN THE COURSE OF THE SUN

Son. It was a wise thought, it seems to me, to ask those questions to which I have just received such fair replies; and I am encouraged to inquire into certain other matters, namely the waxing of the sun, the moon, and the streams or tides of the ocean, — how much and how rapidly these things wax and wane. Now these

things that I have brought up for discussion are subjects which especially touch the welfare of seafaring men, and it looks to me as if they would profit much from a knowledge of these matters, since it gives insight into the right conduct of their profession. And since I intend to labor diligently in the trader's calling, I should like very much, if it can be done, to have you explain further some of those things that I have just mentioned.

Father. Those things that you have now asked about do not all wax or wane with equal rapidity; for the tide, when it rises, completes its course in seven days plus half an hour of the eighth day; and every seventh day there is flood tide in place of ebb. For the tide rises one seventh part daily from the time when the rise begins; and after it turns and begins to fall, it ebbs in the same way during the next seven days but is retarded as much as half an hour of the eighth day,* which must be added to the seven days. As to how long an hour should be I can give you definite information; for there should be twenty-four hours in two days, that is, a night and a day, while the sun courses through the eight chief points of the sky: and according to right reckoning the sun will pass through each division in three hours of the day. On the other hand, the moon, while it waxes, completes its course in fifteen days less six hours; † and in a like period it wanes until the course is complete and another comes. And it is always true that at this time the flood tide is highest and the ebb strongest. But when the moon has waxed to half, the flood tide is lowest and the ebb, too,

* The mean retardation is forty-eight minutes.

† This is within twenty-two minutes of the length of the lunar half-month.

is quite low. At full moon the flood tide is again very high and the ebb is strong. But when it has waned to half, both ebb and flood are quite low. Merchants are, however, scarcely able to note these changes, as the course is too swift; for the moon takes such long strides both in waxing and waning that men, on that account, find it difficult to determine the divisions of its course. The sun, on the other hand, completes its course more slowly both in ascending and declining, so that one may easily mark all the stages of its course. The sun moves upward one hundred and eighty-two and one-half days and three hours and for a like period it recedes again; it has then completed its entire course, both ascent and decline, in three hundred days, by the twelve-count * [360], plus five days and six hours. Every fourth year this becomes three hundred by the twelve-count and six days more[366]; this is called leap year, for it has one day more than the preceding twelvemonth, the additional hours being gathered into twenty-four, a night and a day. In Latin all hundreds are counted by tens, and there are, therefore, properly computed three hundred by the ten-count plus sixty-six days whenever leap year occurs, while the intervening years have only five days and six hours with as many additional days by the other reckoning as I have just stated.

But to your question concerning the growth of the sun's path, how one can most clearly discern it, I can scarcely give an answer so precise as not to be wrong in part; for the sun's path does not wax at the same

* The Northmen in medieval times had two hundreds, the great hundred, or duodecimal hundred, which counted 120 (12×10) and the ordinary hundred (10×10).

rate in all parts of the earth. I can, of course, answer according to what I have found in the writings of men who have treated the subject thoroughly, and it is generally believed that their words come very near the truth. I have already told you how many hours there are in a night and day and gave the number as twenty-four.* I have indicated the length of each hour in stating that three hours pass while the sun moves across one division of the sky. Now there are some other little hours called *ostensa*,† sixty of which make one of those that I mentioned earlier. It seems to me quite likely that, as far north as we are, the sun's path waxes five of these little hours in a day and as much less than six as a twelfth part of a little hour. And as to the growth of the sun's path it seems most reasonable to me that it waxes three-fourths of these hours toward the east and the west and the remaining fourth in height toward the zenith. South of us, however, this reckoning will fail; for north of us the increase is greater and to the south less than we have just stated; and the farther south, the greater is the difference, and the sun more nearly overhead.

VII

THE SUBJECT OF THE SUN'S COURSE CONTINUED

Son. With your permission I wish to inquire somewhat more fully into this subject, for I do not quite understand it. You have said that the sun's ascent is more rapid to the north of us, where summer is almost want-

* See Brenner's edition, 20.

† Error for *ostenta*; the *ostentum*, computed at one-sixtieth of an hour, seems to appear first in the writings of Rabanus Maurus (ninth century).

ing, while the strength of winter is so overpowering that summer seems like a mere shadow, and where in many places both snow and ice lie all through summer just as in winter, as is true of Iceland and particularly of Greenland. But I have heard that in the southlands there are no severe winters, the sun being as hot in winter as it is with us in summer; and that in winter, when the sun has less power, both grain and other crops grow, while in summer the earth cannot endure the fervent heat of the sun and consequently yields neither grass nor grain; so that in regions like Apulia and even more so in the land of Jerusalem the heat of summer causes as great distress as the cold of winter with us. Now when you tell me that the sun's path waxes faster here in the north than yonder in the south, I cannot see the reason why; for there the sun's heat is as great in winter as it is with us in summer; and it is so much greater in summer that all vegetation on the earth is scorched by it. Therefore it seems to me more likely that the sun's path waxes most rapidly where the heat is most intense. Now if you can and will clear this up for me so that I can grasp it, I shall listen gladly and attentively.

Father. I shall begin my talk on the subject that I am now to take up with a little illustration, which may help you to a clearer insight, since you find it so difficult to believe the facts as stated. If you take a lighted candle and set it in a room, you may expect it to light up the entire interior, unless something should hinder, though the room be quite large. But if you take an apple and hang it close to the flame, so near that it is heated, the apple will darken nearly half the room or even more.

However, if you hang the apple near the wall, it will not get hot; the candle will light up the whole house; and the shadow on the wall where the apple hangs will be scarcely half as large as the apple itself. From this you may infer that the earth-circle is round like a ball and not equally near the sun at every point. But where the curved surface lies nearest the sun's path, there will the greatest heat be; and some of the lands that lie continuously under the unbroken rays cannot be inhabited. On the other hand, those lands which the sun approaches with slanting rays may readily be occupied; and yet, some of these are hotter than others according as they lie nearer the sun's path. But when the curved and steep slope of the sphere-shaped wheel moves up before the light and the beams of the sun, it will cast the deepest shadow where its curved surface lies nearest the sun; and yet, the lands nearest the sun are always hottest.* Now I agree with you that Apulia and Jerusalem are hotter than our own country; but you must know that there are places where the heat is greater than in either of those just mentioned, for some countries are uninhabitable on account of the heat. And I have heard it stated as a fact, that even when the sun mounts highest, the night in those regions is very dark and quite long. From this you must conclude that where the strength and power of the sun are greater, since it is nearer, it must ascend and decline more slowly; for the night is long in summer when the sun mounts highest, and the day is long in winter when it sinks lowest. Now I

* It is evident from this discussion that the author believes in a spherical earth; elsewhere, too, he speaks of the sphere of earth (*jarðarbolllr*); see c. lvi.

shall explain this so clearly that you will understand it fully.

You know that here with us in winter the day and the course of the sun are brief; for so short is the sun's path that it passes through but a single region of the sky, and then only where the sun has considerable strength. But in many places the sun is not to be seen during a large part of winter, for example in Halogaland,* as we have not only heard tell but have often and constantly learned and observed with our own eyes. For we know definitely that from about November 10 to January 10 there never comes a day so bright up north in Vaag or at Andenes † in Halogaland but that the stars in the sky are visible at midday as at midnight. And although the days have so much light that the stars cannot be seen, nevertheless, in most of the places that we have mentioned the sun remains invisible till January 23. But after that date the days lengthen and the sun mounts so rapidly, that beginning with April 6 daylight does not disappear before September 17, all the intervening time being one continuous day, for daylight never fails in all that while. From this you may safely conclude that, though the sun is hotter in the southern lands that we spoke of earlier, its course waxes and mounts more slowly where the night, even at mid-summer, is deep and long and dark, and where there is never a time in the whole twelvemonth when day does not fail. But in Halogaland, as I have just said, there is no day

* Hålogaland, the modern *Nordland*, is that part of Norway lying north of the sixty-fifth parallel.

† Vaag and Andenes are points in the Lofoten Islands; their latitudes are $68^{\circ} 12' 35''$ and $69^{\circ} 18' 50''$ respectively.

in winter and stars are visible at midday when the day should be brightest; later, however, when the days begin to lengthen, they grow so rapidly that early in spring daylight begins to tarry all the night and continues till much of the autumn is past.

There remains one more proof which will seem very clear to you. You know that in those localities in Halogaland that we have just mentioned the sun about May 15 begins to shine with the same brightness by night as by day, never setting either at night or during the day but shining continuously in this manner and with this brightness, except when its light is obscured by clouds, even to July 25. Now you know that the sun is only moderately warm in Halogaland, and that there is but a little time in summer when it gives sufficient warmth. Still, there it is with its blazing disk about as long as we have just stated, and it maintains the daylight about as long as we have just computed. But neither fact is true of the southlands, though the sun is hotter there. Now these facts give evidence that the sun is more distant here, for it gives less heat. They also testify to the waxing of its course, for, since its light is as bright by night as by day, its path must lengthen more rapidly here. But yonder it waxes less and more slowly, for there the night has its prescribed period both for length and darkness in summer as well as in winter. 60092

VIII

THE MARVELS OF NORWAY

Son. I see this so clearly now that I can no longer gainsay that the sun mounts higher and more rapidly up the sky where there is almost no day in winter and

the sunlight is so abundant in summer that it shines by night as well as by day throughout almost the entire season. I also see that its course changes much less yonder where it rises high in winter and gives long days with much heat and sunshine, though the night in summer is long and dark. Seafaring traders ought to note the differences precisely so as to be able to determine what seas they are upon, whether they lie to the north or to the south. And it seems unnecessary to inquire any further into these matters, for I believe that I have had correct and sufficient answers. Now since we are wearied with profound questions and thoughtful discourse, let us rest from these for a while and turn our conversation to matters of a lighter sort. And even though I should inquire about things that are not so useful as those others, which are of the highest utility, I pray you for the sake of our intimacy to vouchsafe replies to such questions as I may ask; for my mind is often as eager for amusement as for things of useful intent. And it may seem restful in a long talk, if a few questions come up that can stir the mind to gentle mirth. I do not wish, however, to bring such themes into our talk unless you give me permission.

Father. I take it that you will ask no stupid questions, seeing that you have thus far inquired into such matters only as seem very pertinent; and you are therefore free to ask whatever you wish; for if the questions do not seem appropriate, we are at liberty to drop them as soon as we like.

Son. Now that I am permitted to choose a topic for entertainment, it occurs to me that I have asked too

little about Ireland, Iceland, and Greenland, and all the wonders of those lands, such as fire and strange bodies of water, or the various kinds of fish and the monsters that dash about in the ocean, or the boundless ice both in the sea and on the land, or what the Greenlanders call the "northern lights," or the "sea-hedges" that are found in the waters of Greenland.

Father. I am not much disposed to discuss the wonders that exist among us here in the North, though my reason may be rather trivial: many a man is inclined to be suspicious and think everything fiction that he has not seen with his own eyes; and therefore I do not like to discuss such topics, if my statements are to be called fabrications later on, even though I know them to be true beyond doubt, inasmuch as I have seen some of these things with mine own eyes and have had daily opportunity to inquire about the others from men whom we know to be trustworthy and who have actually seen and examined them, and therefore know them to be genuine beyond question. My reason for bringing up this objection is that a little book has recently come into our country, which is said to have been written in India and recounts the wonders of that country. The book states that it was sent to Emmanuel, emperor of the Greeks.* Now it is the belief of most men who have

* Manuel I, Comnenus, 1143-1180. The "little book" is thought to have been one of the many forms of the legend of Prester John, a fabulous Christian ruler of India of whom much was heard in the middle ages. About 1165 a letter from the "Presbyter Johannes" addressed to the emperor Manuel Comnenus was circulated through Europe and later found its way into the North. In the extant copies of this letter many marvels are told, though the wonder mentioned in the *Speculum Regale* does not appear. See Zarncke, *Der Priester Johannes*, 83-98.

heard the book read, that such wonders are impossible, and that what is told in the book is mere falsehood. But if our own country were carefully searched, there would be found no fewer things here than are numbered in that book which would seem as wonderful, or even more so, to men of other lands who have not seen or heard anything like them. Now we call those things fiction because we had not seen them here or heard of them before the coming of that book which I have just mentioned. That little book has, however, been widely circulated, though it has always been questioned and charged with falsehood; and it seems to me that no one has derived honor from it, neither those who have doubted it nor the one who wrote it, even though his work has been widely distributed and has served to amuse and tickle the ear, seeing that what is written in it has always been called fiction.

IX

POPULAR DOUBT AS TO THE GENUINENESS OF MARVELS

Son. Of course I cannot know how widely our talks will travel either in our days or later; and yet, with your permission, I will again ask the pleasure of hearing further speech concerning those matters that we might think strange in other lands, but which we know are surely genuine. And we need not be so very skeptical of this book which is said to have been written in India, though many marvels are told in it; for there are many things in our own country, which, though not strange to us, would seem wonderful to other people, if our words should fly so far as to come thither where such things

are unheard of. But if I should express surprise at any of those tales that are told in that book, it seems to me not least wonderful that manikins are able to subdue those great winged dragons which infest the mountains and desert places there, as the book tells us, and tame them so completely that men are able to ride them just as they please like horses, fierce and venomous beasts though they are said to be and not inclined to allow men in their neighborhood, still less to be tamed and to do service.

Father. Both such and many other tales are told in that book which seem so marvelous that many express their doubts about them; but it seems to me that there is no need to compare the wonders that are described there with those that we have in our own country, which would seem as strange to men yonder as those that you have just mentioned seem to us. For it must be possible to tame wild beasts and other animals, though they be fierce and difficult to manage. But it would seem a greater marvel to hear about men who are able to tame trees and boards, so that by fastening boards seven or eight ells long under his feet, a man, who is no fleetest than other men when he is barefooted or shod merely with shoes, is made able to pass the bird on the wing, or the fleetest greyhound that runs in the race, or the reindeer which leaps twice as fast as the hart. For there is a large number of men who run so well on skis that they can strike down nine reindeer with a spear, or even more, in a single run. Now such things must seem incredible, unlikely, and marvelous in all those lands where men do not know with what skill and cleverness it is possible to train the board to such great fleetness that

on the mountain side nothing of all that walks the earth can escape the swift movements of the man who is shod with such boards. But as soon as he removes the boards from his feet, he is no more agile than any other man. In other places, where men are not trained to such arts, it would be difficult to find a man, no matter how swift, who would not lose all his fleetness if such pieces of wood as we have talked about were bound to his feet. We, however, have sure information and, when snow lies in winter, have opportunity to see men in plenty who are expert in this art.

Not long since, we mentioned a certain fact which must be thought exceedingly strange elsewhere, as it runs wholly counter to the order which holds good in most places with respect to the change from night to day, namely, that here the sun shines as bright and fair and with as much warmth by night as by day through a large part of the summer.

In our own country, in Möre, there is a bog called the Bjarkudal bog, which must also seem wonderful: for every sort of wood that is thrown into it and left there three winters loses its nature as wood and turns into stone.* If it is thrown upon the fire, it will glow like stone, though before it would have burned like wood. I have seen and handled many such stones of which the half that rose above the mire was wooden, while the part submerged in the bog was wholly petrified. Now we must call that a marvel, for the bog is located in a

* The "Birchdale" bog seems to be a myth; but that stories of such a marvel were current is evident from a statement by Giraldus Cambrensis, who has heard that there was such a bog in Norway. *Opera*, V, 86. Möre is an old Norwegian shire lying to the west of Trondhjem along the coast.

forest which is heavily wooded with young trees of all sorts; and these are not injured so long as they are green and growing, but as soon as one is hewn down and, having begun to decay, is thrown into the bog, it turns into stone.

X

THE NATURAL WONDERS OF IRELAND

Son. I am familiar with all these things since they are found in our own country, and I have seen them all. But I have no knowledge of all those other marvels which are to be found in Iceland, Greenland, and Ireland, and in the seas about those lands, for of those things I have heard rumors only.

Father. Those lands, if we are to speak more fully about them, differ much in character and are not all of the same appearance. For the wonders of Iceland and Greenland consist in great frost and boundless ice, or in unusual display of flame and fire, or in large fishes and other sea monsters. And these countries are everywhere barren and unfruitful and consequently almost unfit for habitation. But Ireland comes near being the best land that is known to man, though the grape vine does not grow there.* And there are many marvels in Ireland, some of which are of such a character that this country may be called holier than all others.

The country lies on that side of the world where heat and cold are so well tempered that the weather is never very hot or very cold. For all through the winter the cattle find their feed in the open, and the inhabitants

* Cf. Giraldus Cambrensis, *Opera*, V, 26-28. Giraldus quotes Bede (*Historia Ecclesiastica*, i, c. 1). See also Isidore, *Etymologiae*, xiv, 6.

wear almost no clothes there either in winter or in summer. And so holy is this land beyond all others that no venomous animal can exist there, either snake or toad.* When such animals are brought in from other countries, they die as soon as they touch the bare earth or rock.† And if wood, earth, or sand is taken from that country and brought to a land where venomous beasts are found, and the sand or earth is strewn around them where they lie, they will never be able to cross the circle but must remain within it and perish. In the same way, if you take a stick of wood which has come from the country of which we now speak and trace a circle around them with it by scratching the soil with the stick, they will soon all lie dead within the circle. It is told of Ireland that men scarcely know of another island of equal size where there are so many holy men. We are also told that the inhabitants of the country are by nature fierce and murderous and very immoral. But bloodthirsty though they be, they have never slain any of the saints who are so numerous in the land; the holy men who have dwelt there have all died in sick bed. For the Irish have been kindly disposed toward all good and holy men, though they have dealt savagely with each other.‡

There is a lake in that country concerning the nature of which strange tales are told; it is called Logechag §

* Cf. Giraldus, *Opera*, V, 62; see also Bede, *Hist. Eccles.*, i, c. 1.

† "Wonders of Ireland" (*Irish Nennius*, 219); this writer states that the experiment has been made.

‡ Giraldus tells us that the Irish are faithless and treacherous (*Opera*, V, 165) but that the island has no martyrs (*ibid.*, 174). Cf. *Ériu*, IV, 4 (Meyer, "Irish Memorabilia in the *Speculum Regale*").

§ The editor of the *Irish Nennius* gives this name as Loch n-Echach (Lough Neagh). P. 195, note.

in the native speech. It is quite an extensive lake and has this property, that if you take a stick of the wood that some call holm and others holly but is called *acrifolium* * in Latin and fix it in the lake so that part of it is in the earth, a part in the water, and a part rising above, the part in the earth will turn into iron, the part in the water into stone, while that which stands out above will remain as before. But if you set any other sort of wood in the lake, its nature will not change.†

Again, there are two springs on a mountain called Blandina,‡ which is almost a desert mountain; these have a peculiar nature. One of them has this property that if you take either a white sheep, cow, or horse, or a man with white hair, and wash any one of these with the water, the white will immediately turn to coal black. And such is the nature of the other spring in that place that if a man washes himself in its water, his hair will turn to a snowy white as if he were an aged man, no matter what its color be before, whether red or white or black.§

There is also a lake in that country which the natives call Loycha. In that lake there is what appears to be a little floating island; for it floats about in the lake, here

* Error for *aquifolium*.

† See the "Wonders of Ireland" (*Irish Nennius*, 195) where a similar account is given; but according to this "the part of it that sinks into the earth will be stone, the part that remains in the water will be iron." Giraldus writes of a petrifying well (*fons*) in the north of Ulster, but gives no place name. *Opera*, V, 86. See also Wright-Halliwel, *Reliquiae Antiquae*, II, 103. (Latin poem on the wonders of Ireland.)

‡ Blandina (Bladina, Bladma) is the Slieve-Bloom range in central Ireland.

§ Giraldus has heard of such springs, but he locates the one in Ulster and the other in Munster. *Opera*, V, 84. A spring that whitens hair is mentioned in Wright-Halliwel, *Reliquiae Antiquae*, II, 104, and in the *Irish Nennius*, 195.

and there approaching the shore sometimes so near that one may step out upon it; and this occurs most frequently on Sundays. And such is the property of this islet that if one who is ill steps out upon it and partakes of the herbs that grow there, he is healed at once, no matter what his ailment may be. Another singular fact is this, that never more than one can come upon it at one time, though many may wish to do so; for as soon as one has landed, the island immediately floats away. It also has this peculiarity that it floats constantly about in the lake for seven winters; but as soon as the seventh winter is past, it floats to the shore somewhere and unites with the other land, as if it had always been joined to it. But when that moment has come, a crash like a peal of thunder is heard, and, when the din is past, another island can be seen in the lake of the same size and character as the earlier one. Thus it happens regularly every seventh year that, as soon as the one island has joined the mainland, another appears, though no one knows whence it comes.*

There is another little island in that country, which the natives call Inhisgluer.† There is a large village on this island and also a church; for the population is about large enough for a parish. But when people die there, they are not buried in the earth but are set up around the church along the churchyard fence, and there they

* See *Ériu*, IV, 6. Kuno Meyer knows of no such story in Irish folklore, but refers to similar tales told of floating islands in Wales and Scotland.

† Inhisgluair, now Inishglory, is on the west coast of Ireland in county Mayo. Giraldus mentions the legend but assigns it to a different locality; see *Opera*, V, 83 and note. The *Irish Nennius* (193) adds that the nails and hair grow and that unsalted meat does not decay on the island. The island is also referred to in the *Reliquiae Antiquae*, II, 103.

stand like living men with their limbs all shriveled but their hair and nails unmarred. They never decay and birds never light on them. And every one who is living is able to recognize his father or grandfather and all the successive ancestors from whom he has descended.

There is still another quite extensive lake that is called Logri.* In that lake is an islet inhabited by men who live a celibate life and may be called, as one likes, either monks or hermits; they live there in such numbers that they fill the island, though at times they are fewer. It is said concerning this isle that it is healthful and quite free from diseases, so that people grow aged more slowly there than elsewhere in the land. But when one does grow very old and sickly and can see the end of the days allotted by the Lord, he has to be carried to some place on the mainland to die; for no one can die of disease on the island. One may sicken and suffer there, but his spirit cannot depart from the body before he has been removed from the island.

There is another large lake which the natives call Logherne.† In this lake there is a great abundance of fish of the sort that we call salmon; and the fish is sent into all the country about in such quantities that all have plenty for table use. In this lake there are also many islands, one of which is called Kertinagh by the natives. This

* Giraldus refers briefly to this legend. *Opera*, V, 81. The editor of Giraldus' writings adds in a note (*ibid.*): "the isle of the living was three miles from Roscrea, parish of Cobally, in a lake called Loch Cre, now dried up." Roscrea is near the north edge of Munster not far from the Slieve Bloom mountains. See also the *Irish Nennius*, 217. Meyer identifies Logri with Loch Ree in west central Ireland. *Ériu*, IV, 7.

† Probably Lough Erne, though Loch Uair, now Lough Owel, in Westmeath has also been suggested.

island might very well be inhabited, as far as size is concerned, if men dared occupy it. But it is reported about this island that the powers of evil have as great authority over one-half of it as they have in hell itself. Venturesome men who have tried to settle there have said that they suffered as great trouble and torment as souls are believed to suffer in hell. But on the other half of the island there is a church with a churchyard about it. Both halves are now deserted, however, though we are told that over the half where the church is the demons have no power.*

It once happened in that country (and this seems indeed strange) that a living creature was caught in the forest as to which no one could say definitely whether it was a man or some other animal; for no one could get a word from it or be sure that it understood human speech. It had the human shape, however, in every detail, both as to hands and face and feet; but the entire body was covered with hair as the beasts are, and down the back it had a long coarse mane like that of a horse, which fell to both sides and trailed along the ground when the creature stooped in walking. I believe I have now recounted most of the marvels that have their origin in the nature of the land itself, so far as we seem to have sure knowledge concerning them.

* Giraldus calls this island the Purgatory of Saint Patrick; but this famous place was "on an island in Lough Derg, in county Donegal." *Opera*, V, 82-83 and note. It seems likely, however, that two different legends have been confused in the Welshman's account.

XI

IRISH MARVELS WHICH HAVE MIRACULOUS ORIGINS

Son. I consider it fortunate that I had some curiosity to know about these matters, for there are no doubt many so ill-informed that they have never heard about such things. Most men who may hear these accounts are likely to find them marvelous, though also somewhat informing. But since I gather from your remarks that there may be certain other things that are wonderful and seem worth discussing, either native to the land or having some other origin, I wish to request that nothing be omitted which you consider worth mentioning, now that we have taken up these subjects.

Father. There still remain certain things that may be thought marvelous; these, however, are not native to the land but have originated in the miraculous powers of holy men, and we know of a truth that these do exist. Certain things are told, too, of which we cannot be sure whether they are credible or merely the talk of men, though they are common rumor in that country; but what follows we know to be true beyond a doubt.

In that same lake that I mentioned earlier which is called Logri, lies a little island named Inisclo dran. Once there was a holy man named Diermicus who had a church on the isle near which he lived. Into this church and churchyard of which he is the patron no female creature is allowed to enter. All beasts are aware of this, for both birds and other animals which are without human reason avoid it as carefully as humans do. And

no creature of the female sex ever ventures into that churchyard, nor could it enter if it tried.*

Once there was a holy man in that country named Kevinus, who lived in a place called Glumelaga.† At the time he lived almost as a hermit, and the event which we shall now relate occurred in his day. It so befell that a young man was living with him, a kinsman of his who was his servant, and the saint loved the youth very much. But the lad fell ill before his eyes, and the malady grew so heavy and severe that death seemed imminent. It was in the spring time, in the month of March, when the man's illness was at the worst. Then it happened that the youth asked his kinsman Kevinus to give him an apple, saying that he would find relief from his illness if he got what he asked for. It seemed unlikely, however, that apples could be gotten in that season, as the buds had only just begun to swell and sprout forth leaves on the fruit trees. But because the holy Kevinus grieved sorely over the illness of his kinsman, and also because he was unable to procure what he had requested, he knelt down in prayer and implored God to send him somewhat of those things, so that his kinsman might find the relief that he yearned for. Having risen from prayer, he stepped outside and looked around. Near the house

* The holy island which is shunned by all females is mentioned by Giraldus (*Opera*, V, 80-81), but he fails to give the name of either the lake or the island. In the "Wonders of Ireland" (*Irish Nennius*, 217) this island is also the one on which no one is permitted to die. A similar legend is alluded to in *Reliquiae Antiquae*, II, 107. Meyer believes that "the Norse version offers a combination or confusion of two different Irish stories, one relating to Diarmait's churchyard in Inis Clothrann, and the other relating to an island on Loch Cré." *Ériu*, IV, 9.

† Glendalough. St. Kevin was the founder of the great abbey of Glendalough. The year of his death is variously given as 617 and 618.

stood a willow of large growth. Kevinus looked up among the branches of the willow as if expecting to find help and comfort there; then he saw that apples had grown upon the willow, just as there would be on an apple tree in the proper season. He picked three apples and gave them to the youth, and after the lad had eaten of these, his illness began to leave him and he was cured of the malady. But the willow has ever since continued to keep the gift that God gave it on that occasion, for every year it bears apples like an apple tree; and since that day these have always been called Saint Kevinus' apples.* They have been carried into all parts of Ireland in order that those who are ill may partake of them; and they seem to have virtue in all human ailments, for those who eat of them appear to get relief. But they are not sweet in taste and would not be wanted if men did not prize them for their healing properties. Many wonderful things have come to pass in Ireland which certain highly endowed saints have brought about in an instant; and these, too, must seem very marvelous. Thus far, however, we have spoken only of such things as have been achieved through a holiness so great that they remain as a testimony to this day and seem as wonderful now as on the day when they first occurred. But those other matters that men regard as surely genuine and speak of as actual facts we may now proceed to point out.

In that country there is also a place called Themar,† which in olden times was apparently a capital or royal

* For a less detailed account of Saint Kevin and the wonderful willow, see Giraldus, *Opera*, V, 113. Cf. *Ériu*, IV, 9.

† Themar was the ancient royal seat Temhair, now Tara. It seems to be alluded to in *Reliquiae Antiquae*, II, 105. Cf. *Ériu*, IV, 10.

borough; now, however, it is deserted, for no one dares to dwell there. It was this event that caused the place to be abandoned: all the people in the land believed that the king who resided at Themar would always render just decisions and never do otherwise; although they were heathen in other respects and did not have the true faith concerning God, they held firmly to their belief that every case would be decided properly if that king passed upon it; and never, they thought, could an unrighteous decision come from his throne. On what seems to have been the highest point of the borough, the king had a handsome and well built castle in which was a large and beautiful hall, where he was accustomed to sit in judgment. But once it happened that certain lawsuits came before the king for decision in which his friends and acquaintances were interested on the one side, and he was anxious to support their contentions in every way. But those who were interested in the suits on the other side were hostile toward him, and he was their enemy. So the outcome was that the king shaped his decision more according to his own wish than to justice. But because an unrighteous judgment had come whence all people expected just decisions and because of this popular belief, the judgment seat was overturned and the hall and the castle likewise, even to their very foundations. The site, too, was overturned, so that those parts of the earth which had formerly pointed downward were now turned upward; and all the houses and halls were turned down into the earth and thus it has been ever since. But because such a great miracle happened there, no one has since dared to inhabit the place,

nor has any king ventured to set up his throne there; and yet, it is the loveliest place known in all that country. It is also thought that if men should attempt to rebuild the town, not a single day would pass without the appearance of some new marvel.

There is still another wonder in that country which must seem quite incredible; nevertheless, those who dwell in the land affirm the truth of it and ascribe it to the anger of a holy man. It is told that when the holy Patricius * preached Christianity in that country, there was one clan which opposed him more stubbornly than any other people in the land; and these people strove to do insult in many ways both to God and to the holy man. And when he was preaching the faith to them as to others and came to confer with them where they held their assemblies, they adopted the plan of howling at him like wolves. When he saw that he could do very little to promote his mission among these people, he grew very wroth and prayed God to send some form of affliction upon them to be shared by their posterity as a constant reminder of their disobedience. Later these clansmen did suffer a fitting and severe though very marvelous punishment, for it is told that all the members of that clan are changed into wolves for a period and roam through the woods feeding upon the same food as wolves; but they are worse than wolves, for in all their wiles they have the wit of men, though they are as eager to devour men as to destroy other creatures. It is reported that to some this affliction comes every seventh winter, while in the intervening years they are

* Saint Patrick.

men; others suffer it continuously for seven winters all told and are never stricken again.*

There is still another matter, that about the men who are called "gelts," † which must seem wonderful. Men appear to become gelts in this way: when hostile forces meet and are drawn up in two lines and both set up a terrifying battle-cry, it happens that timid and youthful men who have never been in the host before are sometimes seized with such fear and terror that they lose their wits and run away from the rest into the forest, where they seek food like beasts and shun the meeting of men like wild animals. It is also told that if these people live in the woods for twenty winters in this way, feathers will grow upon their bodies as on birds; these serve to protect them from frost and cold, but they have no large feathers to use in flight as birds have. But so great is their fleetness said to be that it is not possible for other men or even for greyhounds to come near them; for those men can dash up into a tree almost as swiftly as apes or squirrels.

There happened something once in the borough called Cloena, ‡ which will also seem marvelous. In this town

* See the poem on the "Wonders of Ireland" (*Reliquiae Antiquae*, II, 105), where this transformation is alluded to. Stories of men who have become wolves are also told in Giraldus, *Opera*, V, 101, and in the *Irish Nennius*, 205; but these differ widely from the account given above. Stories of werewolves and lycanthropy are found in folklore everywhere.

† Gelt (*gjalti*) is evidently a Celtic loanword, a form of the Irish *geilt*, meaning mad or madman. Cf. the *Adventures of Suibhne Geilt*, translated by J. G. O'Keefe. Suibhne was an Irish king who lost his reason in battle and for years afterwards led a wild life in the woods. O'Keefe thinks that the author of the *King's Mirror* must have heard the tale of Suibhne (pp. xxxiv-xxxv). See also *Ériu*, IV, 12.

‡ Kuno Meyer identifies Cloena with Clonmacnois. *Ériu*, IV, 12. Clonmacnois is in King's county eight miles southwest of Athlone.

there is a church dedicated to the memory of a saint named Kiranus.* One Sunday while the populace was at church hearing mass, it befell that an anchor was dropped from the sky as if thrown from a ship; for a rope was attached to it, and one of the flukes of the anchor got caught in the arch above the church door. The people all rushed out of the church and marveled much as their eyes followed the rope upward. They saw a ship with men on board floating before the anchor cable; and soon they saw a man leap overboard and dive down to the anchor as if to release it. The movements of his hands and feet and all his actions appeared like those of a man swimming in the water. When he came down to the anchor, he tried to loosen it, but the people immediately rushed up and attempted to seize him. In this church where the anchor was caught, there is a bishop's throne. The bishop was present when this occurred and forbade his people to hold the man; for, said he, it might prove fatal as when one is held under water. As soon as the man was released, he hurried back up to the ship; and when he was up the crew cut the rope and the ship sailed away out of sight. But the anchor has remained in the church since then as a testimony to this event.†

* St. Ciaran (Kiranus) of Clonmacnois was the founder of a great monastery there. The year of his death is given as 547.

† In the *Irish Nennius* (211-213) the following version of this tale appears. "Congalach, son of Maelmithig, was at the fair of Teltown on a certain day, when he saw a ship (sailing) along in the air. One of the crew cast a dart at a salmon. The dart fell down in the presence of the gathering, and a man came out of the ship after it. When he seized its end from above, a man from below seized it from below. Upon which the man from above said: 'I am being drowned,' said he. 'Let him go,' said Congalach; and he is allowed to go up, and then he goes from them swimming." The translation is by Kuno Meyer: *Ériu*, IV, 13. Congalach was an Irish king (944-956); Teltown is in county

I believe we have now mentioned all the features of this country that are most worth discussing. But there is one other matter that I can tell about, if you wish, for the sport or amusement of it. Long time ago a clownish fellow lived in that country; he was a Christian, however, and his name was Klefsan.* It is told of this one that there never was a man who, when he saw Klefsan, was not compelled to laugh at his amusing and absurd remarks. Even though a man was heavy at heart, he could not restrain his laughter, we are told, when he heard that man talk. But Klefsan fell ill and died and was buried in the churchyard like other men. He lay long in the earth until the flesh had decayed from his bones, and his bones, too, were largely crumbled. Then it came to pass that other corpses were buried in the same churchyard, and graves were dug so near the place where Klefsan lay that his skull was unearthed, and it was whole. They set it up on a high rock in the churchyard, where it has remained ever since. But whoever comes to that place and sees that skull and looks into the opening where the mouth and tongue once were immediately begins to laugh, even though he were in a sorrowful mood before he caught sight of that skull. Thus his dead bones make almost as many people laugh as he himself did when alive. Now I know of no further facts about that country which appear to be suitable materials with which to lengthen a talk like this.

Meath. The legend is alluded to in *Reliquiae Antiquae*, II, 105, with some difference in details.

* A somewhat different version of this tale is found in the poem on the "Wonders of Ireland" (*Reliquiae Antiquae*, II, 105). See also *Ériu*, IV, 14.

XII

THE MARVELS OF THE ICELANDIC SEAS:

WHALES; THE KRAKEN

Son. Now since we have discussed everything in Ireland that may be counted marvelous, let us have a talk about Iceland and the wonders that are found in the Icelandic seas.

Father. Aside from the whales in the ocean, there are, I should say, but few things in the Icelandic waters which are worth mentioning or discussing. The whales vary much both in kind and size. Those that are called blubber-cutters — and they are the most numerous — grow to a length of twenty ells; * a great many of them are, however, so small that they measure only ten ells; the rest are in between, each having its own size. These fishes have neither teeth nor whalebone, nor are they dangerous either to ships or men, but are rather disposed to avoid the fishermen. Nevertheless, they are constantly being caught and driven to land by the hundreds, and where many are caught, they provide much food for men.† There are also other varieties of small whales, such as the porpoise, which is never longer than five ells, and the caaing whale, which has a length of seven ells only.

There is another kind of whales called the grampus, which grow no longer than twelve ells and have teeth

* An ell was approximately eighteen inches.

† Whale fishing is an ancient industry in Norway; it is mentioned as early as the ninth century in the writings of Alfred the Great. See Nansen, *In Northern Mists*, I, 172.

in proportion to their size very much as dogs have. They are also ravenous for other whales just as dogs are for other beasts. They gather in flocks and attack large whales, and, when a large one is caught alone, they worry and bite it till it succumbs. It is likely, however, that this one, while defending itself with mighty blows, kills a large number of them before it perishes.

There are two other varieties, the beaked whale and the "hog whale," the largest of which are not more than twenty-five ells in length. These are not fit to be eaten, for the fat that is drawn from them cannot be digested either by man or by any beast that may partake of it. For it runs through them and even through wood; and after it has stood a while, scarcely any vessel can contain it, even if made of horn. There are certain other types which are worth a passing mention only, namely the "raven whale" and the white whale.* The white whales are so named because of their snow white color, while most other varieties are black, except that some of them have spots, such as the "shield whale," the "spear whale," and the baleen whale. All these kinds that I have just mentioned may be freely eaten and many other kinds too.

There is another sort of whales called the "fish driver," † which is perhaps the most useful of all to

* Probably the beluga, also called white whale. The other varieties named in this paragraph, excepting the beaked whale and the baleen whale seem not to have been identified with any known types of whales. It has been suggested that some of them may have been sharks. See Nansen, *In Northern Mists*, II, 243.

† The editor of the Sorö edition identifies this with the nor-caper (*Balæna glacialis*), though he thinks it possible that the fin-fish (*Balænoptera laticeps*) may be meant (p. 125).

men; for it drives the herring and all other kinds of fish in toward the land from the ocean outside, as if appointed and sent by the Lord for this purpose. This is its duty and office as long as the fishermen keep the peace on the fishing grounds. Its nature is also peculiar in this, that it seemingly knows how to spare both ships and men. But when the fishermen fall to quarreling and fighting, so that blood is spilt, this whale seems able to perceive it; for it moves in between the land and the fish and chases the shoals back into the ocean, just as it earlier had driven them in toward the men. These whales are not more than thirty ells in length, or forty at the very largest. They would provide good food, if men were allowed to hunt them, but no one is permitted to catch or harm them, since they are of such great and constant service to men.

Another kind is called the sperm whale. These are toothed whales, though the teeth are barely large enough to be carved into fair-sized knife handles or chess men. They are neither fierce nor savage, but rather of a gentle nature, and so far as possible they avoid the fishermen. In size they are about like those that I mentioned last. Their teeth are so numerous that more than seventy can be found in the head of a single whale of this sort.

Still another species is called the right whale; * this has no fins along the spine and is about as large as the sort that we mentioned last. Sea-faring men fear it very much, for it is by nature disposed to sport with ships.

* *Balæna mysticetus*; also called bowhead or Greenland whale.

There is another kind called the Greenland shark,* which is peculiar in this, that it has caul and fat in the abdomen like cattle. The largest of these whales grow to a length of thirty ells at most.

There are certain varieties that are fierce and savage toward men and are constantly seeking to destroy them at every chance. One of these is called the "horse whale," and another the "red comb." † They are very voracious and malicious and never grow tired of slaying men. They roam about in all the seas looking for ships, and when they find one they leap up, for in that way they are able to sink and destroy it the more quickly. These fishes are unfit for human food; being the natural enemies of mankind, they are, in fact, loathsome. The largest of this type never grow more than thirty or forty ells in length.

There is still another sort called the narwhal, which may not be eaten for fear of disease, for men fall ill and die if they eat of it. This whale is not large in size; it never grows longer than twenty ells. It is not at all savage but rather tries to avoid fishermen. It has teeth in its head, all small but one which projects from the front of the upper jaw. This tooth is handsome, well formed, and straight as an onion stem. It may grow to a length of seven ells and is as even and smooth as if shaped with a tool. It projects straight forward from the head when the whale is traveling; but sharp and straight though it is, it is of no service as a defensive weapon; for the whale

* It is possible that the basking sharks are meant rather than the Greenland sharks; they are larger than the Greenland sharks, but do not seem to be common in the Arctic waters.

† The "horse whale" and the "red comb" have not been identified.

is so fond and careful of its tusk that it allows nothing to come near it. I know of no other varieties of whales that are unfit for human food, only these five that I have now enumerated: the two that I mentioned first were the beaked whale and the "hog whale;" the three mentioned later were the "horse whale," the "red comb," and the narwhal.

There are certain varieties of even greater size which I have not yet described; and all those that I shall now discuss may be eaten by men. Some of them are dangerous for men to meet, while others are gentle and peaceable. One of these is called humpback; this fish is large and very dangerous to ships. It has a habit of striking at the vessel with its fins and of lying and floating just in front of the prow where sailors travel. Though the ship turn aside, the whale will continue to keep in front, so there is no choice but to sail upon it; but if a ship does sail upon it, the whale will throw the vessel and destroy all on board. The largest of these fishes grow to a length of seventy or eighty ells; they are good to eat.

Then there is that kind which is called the Greenland whale.* This fish grows to a length of eighty or even ninety ells and is as large around as it is long; for a rope that is stretched the length of one will just reach around it where it is bulkiest. Its head is so large that it comprises fully a third of the entire bulk. This fish is very cleanly in choice of food; for people say that it subsists wholly on mist and rain and whatever falls into the sea from the air above. When one is caught and its

* This is another name for the right whale described above; the author's classification in this case must have been based on size only.

entrails are examined, nothing is found in its abdomen like what is found in other fishes that take food, for the abdomen is empty and clean. It cannot readily open and close its mouth, for the whalebone which grows in it will rise * and stand upright in the mouth when it is opened wide; and consequently whales of this type often perish because of their inability to close the mouth. This whale rarely gives trouble to ships. It has no teeth and is fat and good to eat.

Then there is a kind of whale called the rorqual, and this fish is the best of all for food. It is of a peaceful disposition and does not bother ships, though it may swim very close to them. This fish is of great size and length; it is reported that the largest thus far caught have measured thirteen times ten ells, that is, one hundred and thirty ells by the ten-count. Because of its quiet and peaceful behavior it often falls a prey to whale fishers. It is better for eating and smells better than any of the other fishes that we have talked about, though it is said to be very fat; it has no teeth. It has been asserted, too, that if one can get some of the sperm of this whale and be perfectly sure that it came from this sort and no other, it will be found a most effective remedy for eye troubles, leprosy, ague, headache, and for every other ill that afflicts mankind. Sperm from other whales also makes good medicine, though not so good as this sort. And now I have enumerated nearly all the varieties of whales that are hunted by men.

* The author seems to believe that the whalebone rises from the lower jaw or the floor of the mouth; as a matter of fact it is fastened to the palate.

There is a fish not yet mentioned which it is scarcely advisable to speak about on account of its size, which to most men will seem incredible. There are, moreover, but very few who can tell anything definite about it, inasmuch as it is rarely seen by men; for it almost never approaches the shore or appears where fishermen can see it, and I doubt that this sort of fish is very plentiful in the sea. In our language it is usually called the "kraken." I can say nothing definite as to its length in ells, for on those occasions when men have seen it, it has appeared more like an island than a fish. Nor have I heard that one has ever been caught or found dead. It seems likely that there are but two in all the ocean and that these beget no offspring, for I believe it is always the same ones that appear. Nor would it be well for other fishes if they were as numerous as the other whales, seeing that they are so immense and need so much food. It is said, that when these fishes want something to eat, they are in the habit of giving forth a violent belch, which brings up so much food that all sorts of fish in the neighborhood, both large and small, will rush up in the hope of getting nourishment and good fare. Meanwhile the monster keeps its mouth open, and inasmuch as its opening is about as wide as a sound or fjord, the fishes cannot help crowding in in great numbers. But as soon as its mouth and belly are full, the monster closes its mouth and thus catches and shuts in all the fishes that just previously had rushed in eagerly to seek food.*

* The kraken myth probably came to the North with the legend of St. Brendan, an Irish abbot, who was believed to have made a journey into the At-

Now we have mentioned and described most of those things in the Icelandic waters that would be counted wonderful, and among them a few that are more plentiful in other seas than in those which we have just discussed.

XIII

THE WONDERS OF ICELAND

Son. Now since we have named most of the species of fish that roam about in the ocean, those that are worth mentioning or discussing, I should like to hear about those features of the land itself that are most worthy of mention. What do you think of the extraordinary fire which rages constantly in that country? Does it rise out of some natural peculiarity of the land, or can it be that it has its origin in the spirit world? And what do you think about those terrifying earthquakes that can occur there, or those marvelous lakes, or the ice which covers all the higher levels?

Father. As to the ice that is found in Iceland, I am inclined to believe that it is a penalty which the land suffers for lying so close to Greenland; for it is to be expected that severe cold would come thence, since Greenland is ice-clad beyond all other lands. Now since Iceland gets so much cold from that side and receives but little heat from the sun, it necessarily has an overabundance of ice on the mountain ridges. But concerning the extraordinary fires which burn there, I scarcely know what to say, for they possess a strange nature. I

lantic about the middle of the sixth century. The oldest extant form of the legend, the *Navigatio Brendani*, dates from the eleventh century. For earlier versions of the myth see Nansen, *In Northern Mists*, II, 234.

have heard that in Sicily there is an immense fire of unusual power which consumes both earth and wood. I have also heard that Saint Gregory has stated in his *Dialogues* * that there are places of torment † in the fires of Sicily. But men are much more inclined to believe that there must be such places of torment in those fires in Iceland. For the fires in Sicily feed on living things, as they consume both earth and wood. Trees live; they grow and put forth green leaves; but they dry up and wither when they begin to die; therefore, since they die when they wither, they must be called living while they are green. The earth, too, must be called living, inasmuch as it sometimes yields much fruitage; and as soon as one crop is fallen into decay, it gives new growth. All living creatures, too, are formed of earth, and therefore it surely must be called living. Both these things, earth and wood, the fires of Sicily can burn and consume as nourishment. The fire of Iceland, however, will burn neither earth nor wood, though these be cast upon it; but it feeds upon stone and hard rock and draws vigor from these as other fires do from dry wood. And never is rock or stone so hard but that this fire will melt it like wax and then burn it like fat oil. But when a tree is cast upon the fire, it will not burn but be scorched only. Now since this fire feeds on dead things only and rejects everything that other fires devour, it must surely be said that it is a dead fire; and it

* *Dialogorum Libri IV.* Pope Gregory died in 604. The Icelandic version of Gregory's *Dialogues* is published in *Heilagra Manna Sögur*, I.

† It is difficult to determine whether the author uses "places of torment" as a term for hell or for purgatory; it seems probable, however, that in this case hell is meant.

seems most likely that it is the fire of hell, for in hell all things are dead.

I am also disposed to believe that certain bodies of water in Iceland must be of the same dead nature as the fire that we have described. For there are springs which boil furiously all the time both winter and summer. At times the boiling is so violent that the heated water is thrown high into the air. But whatever is laid near the spring at the time of spouting, whether it be cloth or wood or anything else that the water may touch when it falls down again, will turn to stone. This seems to lead to the conclusion that this water must be dead, seeing that it gives a dead character to whatever it sprinkles and moistens; for the nature of stone is dead. But if the fire should not be dead but have its origin in some peculiarity of the country, the most reasonable theory as to the formation of the land seems to be that there must be many veins, empty passages, and wide cavities in its foundations. At times it may happen that these passages and cavities will be so completely packed with air, either by the winds or by the power of the roaring breakers, that the pressure of the blast cannot be confined, and this may be the origin of those great earthquakes that occur in that country.* Now if this should seem a reasonable or plausible explanation, it may be that the great and powerful activity of the air within the foundations of the earth also causes those great fires to be lit and to appear, which burst forth in various parts of the land.†

* For the history of this theory see above, pp. 17-18.

† The number of volcanoes in Iceland is variously given, but the more reliable authorities give 107.

Now it must not be regarded as settled that the facts are as we have just said; we have merely tried to bring together and compare various opinions in order to determine what seems most reasonable. For we see that all fire originates in force. If a hard stone is stricken against hard iron, fire comes out of the iron and out of the energy of the stroke when they clash. You can also rub pieces of wood against each other in such a way that their antagonism will produce fire. It also happens frequently that two winds rising at the same time will go against each other; and when they meet in the air, heavy blows fall, and these blows give forth a great fire which spreads widely over the sky.* At times it also happens that this fire is driven to the earth where it causes much damage by burning houses and sometimes forests and ships at sea. But all the fires that I have now named, whether they come from iron, or winds colliding in the air, or any of those mighty forces which can produce fire, will consume trees, forests, and earth: while the fire which we discussed earlier and which appears in Iceland refuses all these things, as I have already shown. Now these facts lead to this conclusion as to its nature, that it is more likely to have arisen from dead things or from like sources, than those other fires that we have now discussed. And in case it is as we have imagined, it is likely that the great earthquakes of that country originate in the power of those mighty fires that well through the bowels of the land.

* The common belief of medieval scientists was that lightning was caused by the collision of clouds.

XIV

THE VOLCANIC FIRES OF ICELAND

Son. I should like very much, with your permission, to ask further about this fire. You stated earlier in your remarks that Gregory has written in his *Dialogues* that there are places of torment in Sicily; but to me it seems more likely that those places are in Iceland. You also said that so vast are the fires in the bowels of the land that earthquakes arise out of their violent movements; but if the fires are so destructive to stone and rock that it melts them like wax and feeds wholly upon them, I should imagine that it would soon consume all the foundations beneath the land and all the mountains as well. Though you may think I am asking childish questions about these things, still I entreat you to give indulgent replies; for, of course, one can ask many questions that reveal youth rather than wisdom.

Father. I have no doubt that there are places of torment in Iceland even in places where there is no burning; for in that country the power of frost and ice is as boundless as that of fire. There are those springs of boiling water which we have mentioned earlier. There are also ice-cold streams which flow out of the glaciers with such violence that the earth and the neighboring mountains tremble; for when water flows with such a swift and furious current, mountains will shake because of its vast mass and overpowering strength. And no men can go out upon those river banks to view them unless they bring long ropes to be tied around those who wish to explore, while farther away others sit holding fast the

rope, so that they may be ready and able to pull them back if the turbulence of the current should make them dizzy. Now it seems evident to me that wherever such a great violence appears and in such terrible forms, there surely must be places of torment. And God has made such great and terrifying things manifest upon earth to man, not only that men may be the more vigilant, and may reflect that these tortures are indeed heavy to think upon, although after they depart this life they will have to suffer those that they see while still on earth; but even more to make them reflect that greater still are the things invisible, which they are not permitted to see. But these things are a testimony, that it is not untrue what we have been told, that those men who will not beware of evil deeds and unrighteousness, while they live on earth, may expect to suffer torment when they leave this world. For many a simple-minded man might think that all this was mere deception unworthy of notice and told merely to terrify, if there were no such evidence as what we have now pointed out. But now no one can deny what he sees before his own eyes, since we hear exactly the same things about the tortures of hell as those which one can see on the island called Iceland: for there are vast and boundless fire, overpowering frost and glaciers, boiling springs, and violent ice-cold streams.*

But what you suggested just now, namely that this fire is likely to melt and consume the mountains and the

* The belief that hell was a region of extreme cold as well as of heat was common in the middle ages. The author of the *King's Mirror* probably derived his ideas of hell in part from the Old Norse version of the *Elucidarium* of Honorius of Autun. See *Annaler for nordisk Oldkyndighed*, 1857, 292.

foundations of the earth, so that the entire land will be destroyed, that cannot come to pass before the time that God has appointed. For neither this created force nor any other governs itself; but all things are compelled to move as God's providence has ordained from the beginning. And you will understand this better if I take up certain events that can be used to illustrate these things.

When the lord of death wished to tempt Job, he had no power to do so before he had asked permission; and when this had been granted, he did not have power to carry out his will farther than the permission extended; for he would gladly have slain Job at once, if that had been allowed. He was allowed to take away Job's wealth and he took it all at the first stroke; but he was not permitted to destroy the man himself. As he yearned for permission to tempt him even more severely than he had already, he was suffered to carry out his will upon Job's body and upon all the possessions that belonged to him. But he was not permitted to separate soul from body, before the hour should come that He had fixed, Who has all power over life and destiny. But as soon as Satan had received permission to carry out his desires upon Job, he showed immediately how eager he was to act in such matters as were within his power. For it is written that Satan took away from Job his abundant wealth and his seven sons and three daughters, and smote his body with terrible leprosy from the crown to the sole of his feet.

Now the meaning of this (which ought to be noted carefully in our minds) is that the Lord of life has power

over all things and is kindly disposed; while the lord of death has an evil will, but has power over nothing, except as he receives authority beforehand from Him Who rules over all, Who is Almighty God. The devil can, therefore, injure no one to such an extent that he is consumed either by the fires of death which he has kindled and continues to maintain by means of dreadful earthquakes, or by such other fiendish enmity or malignity as he delights in. For he is allowed to do nothing more than the task at hand, as is evident from what I have just related about the case of Job. And if it should be thought necessary to cite several examples in one speech, it will be found that instances of this sort are both plentiful and convincing.

XV

OTHER ICELANDIC WONDERS: ORE AND MINERAL
SPRINGS

Son. It seems evident that the more examples I can hear you cite of the sort that leads to knowledge, the better it will be; and from the instance that you have just given I can see clearly that if Satan was not able to carry out his will against one man, except as far as he was permitted, he will surely have even less power to carry out his desires against many thousands, either by his own effort or through a servant, except as far as permission has been given. Now if we are to go on with this entertaining conversation, as we have been doing, I should like to know, whether there are any other things about this island which you think are worth discussing or which seem remarkable.

Father. We have already mentioned nearly everything in Iceland that is really worth noticing; but there are a few other things which I may discuss, if you wish. In that country there is an abundance of the ore that iron is made of: it is called "swamp-ore" in the speech of the people there, and the same term is used among ourselves. It has happened at times that great deposits of this ore have been found, and men have prepared to go thither the next day to smelt it and make iron of it, only to find it gone, and none can tell what becomes of it. This is called the "ore-marvel" in that country. There is still another marvel that men wonder at. It is reported that in Iceland there are springs which men call ale-springs. They are so called because the water that runs from them smells more like ale than water; and when one drinks of it, it does not fill as other water does, but is easily digested and goes into the system like ale. There are several springs in that country that are called ale-springs; but one is the best and most famous of all; this one is found in the valley called Hiterdale.* It is told about this spring, or the water flowing from it, that it tastes exactly like ale and is very abundant. It is also said that if drunk to excess, it goes into one's head. If a house is built over the spring it will turn aside from the building and break forth somewhere outside. It is further held that people may drink as much as they like at the spring; but if they carry the water away, it will soon lose its virtue and is then no better than other

* Mineral springs yielding carbonated waters are found in Iceland, though they are not numerous. The Hiterdale spring is probably mythical. See Herrmann, *Island*, I, 66.

water, or not so good. Now we have discussed many and even trifling things, because in that country they are thought marvelous; and I cannot recall anything else in Iceland that is worth mentioning.

XVI

THE MARVELS OF THE WATERS ABOUT GREENLAND:
MONSTERS, SEALS, AND WALRUSES

Son. Now that we have entered upon this interesting conversation and have spoken of the marvels that are found in Iceland and the Icelandic seas, let us close it by calling to mind what is worth noting in the waters of Greenland or in the land itself and the wonders that are to be seen there.

Father. It is reported that the waters about Greenland are infested with monsters, though I do not believe that they have been seen very frequently. Still, people have stories to tell about them, so men must have seen or caught sight of them. It is reported that the monster called merman is found in the seas of Greenland. This monster is tall and of great size and rises straight out of the water. It appears to have shoulders, neck and head, eyes and mouth, and nose and chin like those of a human being; but above the eyes and the eyebrows it looks more like a man with a peaked helmet on his head. It has shoulders like a man's but no hands. Its body apparently grows narrower from the shoulders down, so that the lower down it has been observed, the more slender it has seemed to be. But no one has ever seen how the lower end is shaped, whether it terminates in a fin like a fish or is pointed like a pole. The form of this

prodigy has, therefore, looked much like an icicle. No one has ever observed it closely enough to determine whether its body has scales like a fish or skin like a man. Whenever the monster has shown itself, men have always been sure that a storm would follow. They have also noted how it has turned when about to plunge into the waves and in what direction it has fallen; if it has turned toward the ship and has plunged in that direction, the sailors have felt sure that lives would be lost on that ship; but whenever it has turned away from the vessel and has plunged in that direction, they have felt confident that their lives would be spared, even though they should encounter rough waters and severe storms.

Another prodigy called mermaid * has also been seen there. This appears to have the form of a woman from the waist upward, for it has large nipples on its breast like a woman, long hands and heavy hair, and its neck and head are formed in every respect like those of a human being. The monster is said to have large hands and its fingers are not parted but bound together by a web like that which joins the toes of water fowls. Below the waist line it has the shape of a fish with scales and

* The belief that mermaids lived in the Arctic waters was one that was long held by European navigators. Henry Hudson reports that on his voyage into the Arctic in 1608 (June 15) some of his men saw a mermaid. "This morning one of our companie looking over boord saw a mermaid, and calling up some of the companie to see her, one more came up and by that time shee was come close to the ships side, looking earnestly on the men: a little after a sea came and overturned her: from the navill upward her backe and breasts were like a womans, as they say that saw her; her body as big as one of us; her skin very white, and long haire hanging downe behind of colour blacke: in her going downe they saw her tayle, which was like the tayle of a porposse and speckled like a macrell." Asher, *Henry Hudson*, 28.

tail and fins. It is said to have this in common with the one mentioned before, that it rarely appears except before violent storms. Its behavior is often somewhat like this: it will plunge into the waves and will always reappear with fish in its hands; if it then turns toward the ship, playing with the fishes or throwing them at the ship, the men have fears that they will suffer great loss of life. The monster is described as having a large and terrifying face, a sloping forehead and wide brows, a large mouth and wrinkled cheeks. But if it eats the fishes or throws them into the sea away from the ship, the crews have good hopes that their lives will be spared, even though they should meet severe storms.

Now there is still another marvel in the seas of Greenland, the facts of which I do not know precisely. It is called "sea hedges," * and it has the appearance as if all the waves and tempests of the ocean have been collected into three heaps, out of which three billows are formed. These hedge in the entire sea, so that no opening can be seen anywhere; they are higher than lofty mountains and resemble steep, overhanging cliffs. In a few cases only have the men been known to escape who were upon the seas when such a thing occurred. But the stories of these happenings must have arisen from the fact that God has always preserved some of those who have been placed in these perils, and their accounts have afterwards spread abroad, passing from man to man. It

* The Danish scientist I. Japetus S. Steenstrup has shown in his paper "Hvad er Kongespeilets Havgjerdinger?" that this phenomenon is produced by sea quakes. The three huge waves did not form a triangle as the author's account would seem to imply; they were three successive waves rolling in toward the shore. Steenstrup argues chiefly from the behavior of sea quakes in modern times. *Aarbøger for nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie*, 1871.

may be that the tales are told as the first ones related them, or the stories may have grown larger or shrunk somewhat. Consequently, we have to speak cautiously about this matter, for of late we have met but very few who have escaped this peril and are able to give us tidings about it.

In that same ocean there are many other marvels, though they cannot be reckoned among the prodigies. As soon as one has passed over the deepest part of the ocean, he will encounter such masses of ice in the sea, that I know no equal of it anywhere else in all the earth. Sometimes these ice fields are as flat as if they were frozen on the sea itself. They are about four or five ells thick and extend so far out from the land that it may mean a journey of four days or more to travel across them. There is more ice to the northeast and north of the land than to the south, southwest, and west; consequently, whoever wishes to make the land should sail around it to the southwest and west, till he has come past all those places where ice may be looked for, and approach the land on that side.* It has frequently happened that men have sought to make the land too soon and, as a result, have been caught in the ice floes. Some of those who have been caught have perished; but others have got out again, and we have met some of these and have heard their accounts and tales. But all those who

* The settled portion of Greenland is in the southern part on the west coast. The author wishes to say that a ship sailing from Norway to Greenland must round Cape Farewell and proceed some distance up the west coast before trying to make land. For a discussion of the conditions of settlement in Greenland and the navigation of the waters about Greenland, see Hovgaard, *The Voyages of the Norsemen to America*, c. ii; Nansen, *In Northern Mists*, cc. vii, viii.

have been caught in these ice drifts have adopted the same plan: they have taken their small boats and have dragged them up on the ice with them, and in this way have sought to reach land; but the ship and everything else of value had to be abandoned and was lost. Some have had to spend four days or five upon the ice before reaching land, and some even longer.

These ice floes have peculiar habits. Sometimes they lie as quiet as can be, though cut apart by creeks or large fjords; at other times they travel with a speed so swift and violent that a ship with a fair wind behind is not more speedy; and when once in motion, they travel as often against the wind as with it. There is also ice of a different shape which the Greenlanders call icebergs. In appearance these resemble high mountains rising out of the sea; they never mingle with other ice but stand by themselves.

In those waters there are also many of those species of whales which we have already described. It is claimed that there are all sorts of seals, too, in those seas, and that they have a habit of following the ice, as if abundant food would never be wanting there. These are the species of seals that are found there. One is called the "corse seal;" its length is never more than four ells. There is another sort called the "erken-seal," * which grows to a length of five ells or six at the very longest. Then there is a third kind which is called the "flett seal," which grows to about the same length as those mentioned above. There is still a fourth kind, called the

* This is called *haverken* in modern Norse and seems to be the same as the grey seal: *Halichoerus gryphus*. See Nansen, *In Northern Mists*, II, 155.

bearded seal, which occasionally grows to a length of six ells or even seven. In addition there are various smaller species, one of which is called the saddleback; * it has this name because it does not swim on the belly like other seals but on the back or side; its length is never more than four ells. There remains the smallest kind, which is called the " short seal " and is not more than two ells in length. It has a peculiar nature; for it is reported that these seals can pass under flat ice masses four or even five ells thick and can blow up through them; consequently they can have large openings wherever they want them.

There still remains another species which the Greenlanders count among the whales, but which, it seems to me, ought rather to be classed with the seals.† These are called walrus and grow to a length of fourteen ells or fifteen at the very highest. In shape this fish resembles the seal both as to hair, head, skin, and the webbed feet behind; it also has the swimming feet in front like the seal. Its flesh like that of other seals must not be eaten on fast days. Its appearance is distinguished from that of other seals in that it has, in addition to the other small teeth, two large and long tusks, which are placed in the front part of the upper jaw and sometimes grow to a length of nearly an ell and a half. Its hide is thick and good to make ropes of; it can be cut into leather strips of such strength that sixty or more men may pull at one rope without breaking it. The seals that we have just discussed are called fish because they find their food

* Also called the harp seal: *Phoca Grænländica*.

† This observation accords with modern scientific classification.

in the sea and subsist upon other fishes. They may be freely eaten, though not like the whales, for whale flesh may be eaten on fast days like other fish food, while these fishes may be eaten only on the days when flesh food is allowed. Now I know of nothing else in the waters of Greenland which seems worth mentioning or reporting, — only those things that we have just discussed.

XVII

THE ANIMAL LIFE OF GREENLAND AND THE CHARACTER
OF THE LAND IN THOSE REGIONS

Son. These things must seem wonderful to all who may hear of them, — both what is told about the fishes and that about the monsters which are said to exist in those waters. Now I understand that this ocean must be more tempestuous than all other seas; and therefore I think it strange that it is covered with ice both in winter and in summer, more than all other seas are. I am also curious to know why men should be so eager to fare thither, where there are such great perils to beware of, and what one can look for in that country which can be turned to use or pleasure. With your permission I also wish to ask what the people who inhabit those lands live upon; what the character of the country is, whether it is ice-clad like the ocean or free from ice even though the sea be frozen; and whether corn grows in that country as in other lands. I should also like to know whether you regard it as mainland or as an island, and whether there are any beasts or such other things in that country as there are in other lands.

Father. The answer to your query as to what people go to seek in that country and why they fare thither through such great perils is to be sought in man's three-fold nature. One motive is fame and rivalry, for it is in the nature of man to seek places where great dangers may be met, and thus to win fame. A second motive is curiosity, for it is also in man's nature to wish to see and experience the things that he has heard about, and thus to learn whether the facts are as told or not. The third is desire for gain; for men seek wealth wherever they have heard that gain is to be gotten, though, on the other hand, there may be great dangers too. But in Greenland it is this way, as you probably know, that whatever comes from other lands is high in price, for this land lies so distant from other countries that men seldom visit it. And everything that is needed to improve the land must be purchased abroad, both iron and all the timber used in building houses. In return for their wares the merchants bring back the following products: buckskin, or hides, sealskins, and rope of the kind that we talked about earlier which is called "leather rope" and is cut from the fish called walrus, and also the teeth of the walrus.

As to whether any sort of grain can grow there, my belief is that the country draws but little profit from that source. And yet there are men among those who are counted the wealthiest and most prominent who have tried to sow grain as an experiment; but the great majority in that country do not know what bread is, having never seen it. You have also asked about the extent of the land and whether it is mainland or an island;

but I believe that few know the size of the land, though all believe that it is continental and connected with some mainland, inasmuch as it evidently contains a number of such animals as are known to live on the mainland but rarely on islands. Hares and wolves are very plentiful and there are multitudes of reindeer. It seems to be generally held, however, that these animals do not inhabit islands, except where men have brought them in; and everybody seems to feel sure that no one has brought them to Greenland, but that they must have run thither from other mainlands. There are bears, too, in that region; they are white, and people think they are native to the country, for they differ very much in their habits from the black bears that roam the forests. These kill horses, cattle, and other beasts to feed upon; but the white bear of Greenland wanders most of the time about on the ice in the sea, hunting seals and whales and feeding upon them. It is also as skillful a swimmer as any seal or whale.

In reply to your question whether the land thaws out or remains icebound like the sea, I can state definitely that only a small part of the land thaws out, while all the rest remains under the ice. But nobody knows whether the land is large or small, because all the mountain ranges and all the valleys are covered with ice, and no opening has been found anywhere. But it is quite evident that there are such openings, either along the shore or in the valleys that lie between the mountains, through which beasts can find a way; for they could not run thither from other lands, unless they should find open roads through the ice and the soil thawed out.

Men have often tried to go up into the country and climb the highest mountains in various places to look about and learn whether any land could be found that was free from ice and habitable. But nowhere have they found such a place, except what is now occupied, which is a little strip along the water's edge.

There is much marble in those parts that are inhabited; it is variously colored, both red and blue and streaked with green. There are also many large hawks in the land, which in other countries would be counted very precious, — white falcons, and they are more numerous there than in any other country; but the natives do not know how to make any use of them.*

XVIII

THE PRODUCTS OF GREENLAND

Son. You stated earlier in your talk that no grain grows in that country; therefore I now want to ask you what the people who inhabit the land live on, how large the population is, what sort of food they have, and whether they have accepted Christianity.

Father. The people in that country are few, for only a small part is sufficiently free from ice to be habitable; but the people are all Christians and have churches and priests. If the land lay near to some other country it might be reckoned a third of a bishopric; but the Green-

* In the thirteenth century, the century of the *King's Mirror*, falconry was a favorite sport of the European nobility and there seems to have been some demand for Norwegian hawks. In the Close Rolls of the reign of Henry III there are allusions to gifts of hawks sent by the king of Norway to the English king. See above p. 29.

landers now have their own bishop,* as no other arrangement is possible on account of the great distance from other people. You ask what the inhabitants live on in that country since they sow no grain; but men can live on other food than bread.† It is reported that the pasturage is good and that there are large and fine farms in Greenland. The farmers raise cattle and sheep in large numbers and make butter and cheese in great quantities. The people subsist chiefly on these foods and on beef; but they also eat the flesh of various kinds of game, such as reindeer, whales, seals, and bears. That is what men live on in that country.

XIX

THE CLIMATE OF GREENLAND; THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

Son. I believe I still have some questions to ask about this country. How do you account for the fact that Greenland and the ocean that lies about it have greater masses of ice than any other land or sea? For I gather from what you have said that the ocean is deep and also very salt and always in commotion; and I did not suppose that it could freeze readily there, since, where the ocean is deep and the water is salt, ice forms with difficulty, especially when the sea is in turmoil and the waves roll high. But now I hear about these waters that we have just talked about and likewise about the land,

* The diocese of Gardar in Greenland was established about 1110. For an account of the Norwegian colony in Greenland see Gjerset, *History of the Norwegian People*, I, 197-204.

† Cf. the papal letter of Alexander VI, written in 1492. Olson and Bourne, *The Northmen, Columbus, and Cabot*, 73-74.

that there is never an interval when the land or the sea is not covered with ice, except that occasionally an opening appears here and there in the ice field; but this is due to the stirring of the sea and not to the heat.

Now since the land is constantly frozen over in both winter and summer, I wish to ask you to tell me exactly how the climate is in Greenland: whether there is any warmth or fair sunshine as in other lands, or if the weather is always unpleasant, and whether that is what causes the excessive ice and frost. I should like to have you clear this matter up for me along with those things that I asked about earlier in our conversation, and what that thing is which the Greenlanders call the northern lights.* All these questions I should like to have you answer, and also this, in what part of the world you believe that country to be located: whether it lies somewhere on the edge of the world or about some large bend in the ocean like other extensive lands, seeing that you think it is joined to other mainlands.

Father. The matters about which you have now inquired I cannot wholly clear up for you, inasmuch as I have not yet found any one who has knowledge of the entire "home-circle" † and its dimensions and who has explored the whole earth on all its sides, or the nature of the lands and the landmarks located there. If I had ever

* We should infer from the form of this question and from the later discussion of the northern lights that this phenomenon was not prominent in Norway in the thirteenth century. There seem to be periods when these "lights" are less in evidence than at other times. But it should also be noted that the author discusses whales in connection with Greenland and Iceland only, though it is extremely likely that whales were not unknown on the shores of Norway.

† The "home-circle" (*kringla heimsins*) was the Old Norse translation for the Latin *orbis terrarum*, orb of the earth.

met such a man, one who had seen and examined these things, I should have been able to give you full information about them. But I can at least tell you what those men have conjectured who have formed the most reasonable opinions.

The men who have written best concerning the nature of the earth, following the guidance of Isidore and other learned men,* state that there are certain zones on the heavens under which men cannot live. One is very hot and, because of the glowing heat which burns everything that comes beneath it, people cannot exist under this zone. It seems reasonable that this is the broad path of the sun, and I believe it is because this zone is pervaded with the sun's flaming rays that no one who wishes only a moderately warm dwelling place can live beneath it. These writers have also said concerning two other zones in the sky that under them too the land is uninhabitable; because, on account of their frigidity, it is no more comfortable to dwell under them than under the first mentioned where the heat is torrid. For there the cold has developed such a power that water casts aside its nature and turns into ice masses; in this way all those lands become ice-cold, and the seas too, that lie under either of these two zones. From this I conclude that there are five zones in the heavens: two under

* Isidore of Seville (d. 636) discusses the five zones in his *Etymologiae*, iii, c. xlv; xiii, c. vi; and in his *De Natura Rerum*, c. x. The editors of the Sorø edition suggest that the "other learned men" may be Macrobius and Martianus Capella, the famous encyclopedists of the fifth century (p. 195). But as these writers preceded Isidore by nearly two centuries, it is unlikely that their works were more than indirect sources for the scientific statements in the *Speculum Regale*. It is more probable that the reference is to such writers as Bede, Rabanus Maurus, and Honorius of Autun, though it is impossible to specify what authority was followed.

which the earth is habitable, and three under which it is uninhabitable.

Now all the land that lies under the zones between the hot and the cold belts can be occupied; but it is likely that owing to location the lands differ somewhat, so that some are hotter than others; the hottest being those that are nearest the torrid belt. But lands that are cold, like ours, lie nearer the frigid zones, where the frost is able to use its chilling powers. Now in my opinion it seems most probable that the hot zone extends from east to west in a curved ring like a flaming girdle around the entire sphere. On the other hand, it is quite probable that the cold zones lie on the outer edges of the world to the north and south: and in case I have thought this out correctly, it is not unlikely that Greenland lies under the frigid belt; for most of those who have visited Greenland testify that there the cold has received its greatest strength. Moreover, both sea and land bear testimony in their very selves that there the frost and the overpowering cold have become dominant, for both are frozen and covered with ice in summer as well as in winter.

It has been stated as a fact that Greenland lies on the outermost edge of the earth toward the north; and I do not believe there is any land in the home-circle beyond Greenland, only the great ocean that runs around the earth. And we are told by men who are informed that alongside Greenland the channel is cut through which the wide ocean rushes into the gap that lies between the land masses and finally branches out into fjords and inlets which cut in between the lands wherever the sea is allowed to flow out upon the earth's surface.

You asked whether the sun shines in Greenland and whether there ever happens to be fair weather there as in other countries; and you shall know of a truth that the land has beautiful sunshine and is said to have a rather pleasant climate. The sun's course varies greatly, however; when winter is on, the night is almost continuous; but when it is summer, there is almost constant day. When the sun rises highest, it has abundant power to shine and give light, but very little to give warmth and heat; still, it has sufficient strength, where the ground is free from ice, to warm the soil so that the earth yields good and fragrant grass. Consequently, people may easily till the land where the frost leaves, but that is a very small part.

But as to that matter which you have often inquired about, what those lights can be which the Greenlanders call the northern lights, I have no clear knowledge. I have often met men who have spent a long time in Greenland, but they do not seem to know definitely what those lights are. However, it is true of that subject as of many others of which we have no sure knowledge, that thoughtful men will form opinions and conjectures about it and will make such guesses as seem reasonable and likely to be true. But these northern lights have this peculiar nature, that the darker the night is, the brighter they seem; and they always appear at night but never by day, — most frequently in the densest darkness and rarely by moonlight. In appearance they resemble a vast flame of fire viewed from a great distance. It also looks as if sharp points were shot from this flame up into the sky; these are of uneven height

and in constant motion, now one, now another darting highest; and the light appears to blaze like a living flame. While these rays are at their highest and brightest, they give forth so much light that people out of doors can easily find their way about and can even go hunting, if need be. Where people sit in houses that have windows, it is so light inside that all within the room can see each other's faces. The light is very changeable. Sometimes it appears to grow dim, as if a black smoke or a dark fog were blown up among the rays; and then it looks very much as if the light were overcome by this smoke and about to be quenched. But as soon as the smoke begins to grow thinner, the light begins to brighten again; and it happens at times that people think they see large sparks shooting out of it as from glowing iron which has just been taken from the forge. But as night declines and day approaches, the light begins to fade; and when daylight appears, it seems to vanish entirely.

The men who have thought about and discussed these lights have guessed at three sources, one of which, it seems, ought to be the true one. Some hold that fire circles about the ocean and all the bodies of water that stream about on the outer sides of the globe; and since Greenland lies on the outermost edge of the earth to the north, they think it possible that these lights shine forth from the fires that encircle the outer ocean. Others have suggested that during the hours of night, when the sun's course is beneath the earth, an occasional gleam of its light may shoot up into the sky; for they insist that Greenland lies so far out on the earth's edge that the

curved surface which shuts out the sunlight must be less prominent there. But there are still others who believe (and it seems to me not unlikely) that the frost and the glaciers have become so powerful there that they are able to radiate forth these flames. I know nothing further that has been conjectured on this subject, only these three theories that I have presented; as to their correctness I do not decide, though the last mentioned looks quite plausible to me. I know of no other facts about Greenland that seem worth discussing or mentioning, only those that we have talked about and what we have noted as the opinions of well-informed men.

XX

THE SUBJECT OF THE NORTHERN LIGHTS CONTINUED

Son. Everything that you have told here seems wonderful to me, though also very instructive, and this fact most of all, that men, as you have pointed out, are able to leave the earth, as it were, and view for themselves the boundaries which God has drawn amid such great perils. Your last remark, however, suggests that there is yet a little matter to inquire about along this same line. In speaking of those three conjectures you said that you think it most likely that these lights have their origin in frost and ice; but just before in describing their appearance, you added that now and then fog and dark mist resembling smoke would mount up among these lights. But even if the cold should be so prevalent there as to give rise to these lights with their fire-like rays, I cannot help wondering whence that smoke can come

which sometimes appears to shade and becloud the light till it seems almost quenched; for to me it seems more likely that the smoke is due to heat than to frost. There is one more thing that looks strange to me which you mentioned earlier in your speech, namely that you consider Greenland as having a good climate, even though it is full of ice and glaciers. It is hard for me to understand how such a land can have a good climate.

Father. When you say, in asking about the smoke that sometimes appears to accompany the northern lights, that you think it more likely that the smoke comes from heat than from cold, I agree with you. But you must also know that wherever the earth is thawed under the ice, it always retains some heat down in the depths. In the same way the ocean under the ice retains some warmth in its depths. But if the earth were wholly without warmth or heat, it would be one mass of ice from the surface down to its lowest foundations. Likewise, if the ocean were without any heat, it would be solid ice from the surface to the bottom. Now large rifts may appear in the ice that covers the land as well as openings in the ice upon the sea. But wherever the earth thaws out and lies bare, whether in places where there is no ice or under the yawning rifts in the glacier, and wherever the sea lies bare in the openings that have formed in the ice, there steam is emitted from the lower depths; and it may be that this vapor collects and appears like smoke or dark fog; and that, whenever it looks as if the lights are about to be quenched by smoke or fog, it is this vapor that collects before them.

In reply to your remark about the climate of Greenland, that you think it strange that it is called a good climate, I shall tell you something about the nature of the land. When storms do come, they are more severe than in most other places, both with respect to keen winds and vast masses of ice and snow. But usually these spells of rough weather last only a short while and come at long intervals only. In the meantime the weather is fair, though the cold is intense. For it is in the nature of the glacier to emit a cold and continuous breath which drives the storm clouds away from its face so that the sky above is usually clear.* But the neighboring lands often have to suffer because of this; for all the regions that lie near get severe weather from this ice, inasmuch as all the storms that the glacier drives away from itself come upon others with keen blasts. Now if this is clear to you, I believe there is no need of giving any further explanation of the subject than what you have now heard.

XXI

THE ZONES OF HEAT AND COLD

Son. These things are all clear to me and it seems reasonable that they should be as you say. Still, there are a few things that you mentioned a little earlier in your talk, which I wish to ask about, if you permit. You said that both sides of the earth are cold, the southern

* By glacier the author evidently means the great inland ice masses. On the effect of this inland ice on the climate of Greenland and neighboring regions, see Nansen, *In Northern Mists*, II 247

as well as the northern. But I hear it said by all men who come from the regions to the south that the farther south one travels, the hotter the lands are. Likewise all the winds that come from the south are both moister and milder than other winds. In the winter those winds always bring a good thaw, while other winds are so cold that they bring frost, and ice is formed. And during the summer the south wind is still warmer than other winds. Now if my questions do not tire you and I do not seem to ask too much, I should like to have you answer this question too.

Father. When I told you that in the skies three belts are traced under which it is difficult to cross, one torrid and two frigid, I added that the hot belt curves from east to west. But if I have stated this correctly, it will be evident that the cold must be as severe in the southern parts as in the northern.* I believe, however, that all the regions lying near the hot belt, whether on the south side or on the north, are also hot; but I believe those lands to be frigid which lie very far in either direction. You have stated that all men tell us that the farther south one travels, the greater the heat; but that, I believe, is due to the fact that you have never found any one who has traveled as far south of the hot belt as those lands which we have now talked of lie to the north. You have also said that the winds which come from a southerly direction are warmer than the rest. But it is reasonable that the south wind should be warm when it

* Cf. *Macrobius*, 601. " . . . for both the northern and the southern extremities lie stiff with perpetual frost, and they are like two zones with which the earth is girdled, but narrow as if they were circlets drawn about the farthest regions."

reaches us, even though it comes from the frozen south side of the earth, for it blows through the curved ring of the torrid belt.* Consequently, though it blows cold from the south, it is warm when it emerges on the northern side. And if people live as near the cold belt on the southern side as the Greenlanders do on the northern, I firmly believe that the north wind blows as warm to them as the south wind to us. For they must look north to see the midday and the sun's whole course, just as we, who dwell north of the sun, must look to the south.

We have said earlier that in winter the sun's course here is short, but of such extraordinary length in summer that we then have day nearly all the time. From this you may conclude that the sun's path is quite broad and that its course is not narrow and straight as if it were always following a certain line. As soon as it reaches the outer edge of its sloping circuit toward the south, those who live on the extreme side of the world to the south have summer and long sun paths, while we have winter and little sunlight. And when the sun comes to the extreme edge of its circuit to the north, we have long-continued sunshine, while they have cold winter. For it is always this way, that the sun rises higher in the north when its path declines in the south: and when its course begins to decline in the north, it begins to wax on the southern side.

* Macrobius states the same belief in quite similar terms: the south wind comes from a frozen clime just as the north wind does; but "since it comes to us through the flames of the torrid zone and mixes with the fire, it becomes hot, so that what was cold in the beginning comes to us with warmth." (P. 603.)

You should also know that the change from day to night is due to the movements of the sun. For some places have midday when others have midnight; and the day dawns and brightens in some places just when darkness begins and night falls in other places.* For the day and the light always follow the sun, while the shadows flee from it; still they follow after it as it moves away; and there is always night where the shadows are, but always day where the light is. Now if you understand all these things that we have discussed in these hours, the change in day and night, the course of the sun, and all the other matters that we have talked about, you may count yourself thoroughly prepared for the trader's calling, inasmuch as few only have had more instruction in these subjects than you have had.

XXII

THE WINDS WITH RESPECT TO NAVIGATION

Son. I should indeed consider it highly informing, if I could remember all the things that you have now told me. I gather from your remarks, however, that you seem to think that I have asked about too many things in these our talks. But if you are not wearied with my questions, there still remains a little matter which, with your permission, I should like to ask about, one that also seems to belong to the knowledge of seafarers.

In a talk some time ago you said that whoever wishes to be a merchant ought to be prepared early in spring, and be careful not to remain out at sea too late in the

* Cf. Capella, *Satiricon*, 204.

autumn; but you did not indicate the earliest time in the spring when you think one may risk a journey overseas to other countries, nor how late you consider it safe to sail the seas in autumn. You told how the ocean manages to quiet its storms, but you did not show under what circumstances it begins to grow restless. Therefore I would fain ask you again to answer this question, even if it does annoy you, for I think that a time may come when it will seem both needful to know this and instructive to understand it.

Father. The matters to which you are now referring can scarcely be grouped under one head; for the seas are not all alike, nor are they all of equal extent. Small seas have no great perils, and one may risk crossing them at almost any time; for one has to make sure of fair winds to last a day or two only, which is not difficult for men who understand the weather. And there are many lands where harbors are plentiful as soon as the shore is reached. If the circumstances are such that a man can wait for winds in a good haven or may confidently expect to find good harbors as soon as he has crossed, or if the sea is so narrow that he needs to provide for a journey of only a day or two, then he may venture to sail over such waters almost whenever he wishes. But where travel is beset with greater perils, whether because the sea is wide and full of dangerous currents, or because the prow points toward shores where the harbors are rendered insecure by rocks, breakers, shallows, or sand bars, — wherever the situation is such, one needs to use great caution; and no one should venture to travel over such waters when the season is late.

Now as to the time that you asked about, it seems to me most correct to say that one should hardly venture over-seas later than the beginning of October. For at that time the sea begins to grow very restless, and the tempests always increase in violence as autumn passes and winter approaches. And about the time when we date the sixteenth of October, the east wind begins to look sorrowful and thinks himself disgraced, now that his headgear, the golden crown, is taken away. He puts a cloud-covered hat on his head and breathes heavily and violently, as if mourning a recent loss. But when the southeast wind sees how vexed his neighbor is, he is stricken with a double grief: the one sorrow is that he fears the same deprivation as the east wind has suffered; the other is grief over the misfortunes of his good and estimable neighbor. Stirred by the distress of a resentful mind, he knits his brows under the hiding clouds and blows the froth violently about him. When the south wind sees the wrath of his near neighbors, he wraps himself in a cloud-lined mantle in which he conceals his treasures and his wealth of warm rays and blows vigorously as if in terrifying defence. And when the southwest wind observes how friendship has cooled, now that the truce is broken, he sobs forth his soul's grief in heavy showers, rolls his eyes above his tear-moistened beard, puffs his cheeks under the cloudy helmet, blows the chilling scud violently forward, leads forth huge billows, wide-breasted waves, and breakers that yearn for ships, and orders all the tempests to dash forward in angry contest.

But when the west wind observes that a wrathful blast and a sorrowful sighing are coming across to him

from the east, whence formerly he was accustomed to receive shining beams with festive gifts, he understands clearly that the covenant is broken and that all treaties are renounced. Deeply grieved and pained because of the unpeace, he puts on a black robe of mourning over which he pulls a cloud-gray cloak, and, sitting with wrinkled nose and pouting lips, he breathes heavily with regretful care. And when the ill-tempered northwest wind observes how sorrowful his neighbors look, and sees how he himself has suffered the loss of the evening beauty which he was formerly accustomed to display, he shows at once his temper in stern wrath: he knits his brows fiercely, throws rattling hail violently about, and sends forth the rolling thunder with terrifying gleams of lightning, thus displaying on his part a fearful and merciless anger. But when the north wind misses the friendliness and the kind gifts which he was wont to get from the south wind, he seeks out his hidden treasures and displays the wealth that he has most of: he brings out a dim sheen which glitters with frost, places an ice-cold helmet on his head above his frozen beard, and blows hard against the hail-bearing cloud-heaps. But the chill northeast wind sits wrathful with snowy beard and breathes coldly through his wind-swollen nostrils. Glaring fiercely under his rimy brows, he wrinkles his cheeks beneath his cold and cloudy temples, puffs his jowl with his icy tongue, and blows the piercing drift-snow vigorously forth.

But since peace has been broken among these eight chiefs and the winds are stirred to stormy violence, it is no longer advisable for men to travel over-seas

from shore to shore because of great perils: the days shorten; the nights grow darker; the sea becomes restless; the waves grow stronger and the surf is colder; showers increase and storms arise; the breakers swell and the shores refuse good harbors; the sailors become exhausted, the lading is lost, and there is great and constant destruction of life due to a too great venturesomeness; souls are placed in perils of judgment because of recklessness and sudden death. Therefore all sensible men should beware and not venture upon the sea too late in the season; for there are many dangers to look out for and not one alone, if a man dares too much at such times. Consequently, the better plan is to sail while summer is at its best; for one is not likely to meet misfortune if there has been careful and wise forethought. But it would surely pass all expectations if that were to succeed which was foolishly advised and planned at the beginning, though sometimes the outcome may be favorable. I consider it a more sensible plan for a man to remain quiet as long as much danger may be looked for, and to enjoy during the winter in proper style and in restful leisure what he labored to win during the summer, than to risk in a little while through his own obstinate contriving the loss of all the profit which he strove to gain in the summer. But first of all a man must have care for his own person; for he can have no further profit, if it fares so ill that he himself goes under.

XXIII

THE PROPER SEASON FOR NAVIGATION.

END OF THE FIRST PART

Son. I did wisely to continue my inquiries when we had our last talk; for you have given replies which will be useful as well as instructive for all who have the sense to understand and profit by such matters as we have discussed. But I wish to ask you again to tell me briefly how early in the spring and at what stated time you think one may venture to travel over-seas to other shores, just as I asked in my earlier inquiries.

Father. Men may venture out upon almost any sea except the largest as early as the beginning of April. For at the time when we date the sixteenth of March, the days lengthen, the sun rises higher, and the nights grow shorter. The north wind gently clears up the face of heaven with a light and cool breeze, brushes away the restless and storm-laden clouds, and with blithe persuasiveness asks for a new covenant. Then peace is renewed among the winds, for they all yearn for rest after the season of violent wrath and wearisome blasts; so they make a covenant once more in the way that we told earlier when we described the peace making. The showers cease, the waves sink to rest, the breakers flag, the swell of the noisy ocean dies away, all the storms weaken, and quiet follows upon restless turmoil.

Now I have done as you requested: I have pointed out the seasons with definite dates both in spring and fall, when it seems most advisable to brave the perils of the sea. I have also informed you as to the times that

seem more suitable for rest than for travel. I have likewise described briefly the sources of light in the sky and the belts that are drawn across the heaven, those under which travel is difficult and those which allow travel. And if you keep carefully in mind all these things that I have discussed with you, you will never be counted among the ignorant navigators, if you shall decide to try the trader's calling. My advice, therefore, is first to fix in your mind all the facts which you have now heard; and later you shall have a chance to ask further questions, if you should wish to do so.

XXIV

INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND PART:

THE KING AND HIS COURT

Son. The last time that I had a talk with you, sire, I heard a wise speech from your lips, one that should profit every man who intends to follow the craft with which our conversation was concerned. Since then I have meditated on that speech, and I believe that I have fixed firmly in memory most of the facts that were brought out at the time, whatever luck I may have later in trying to apply them. No doubt I ought, like everyone else, to observe carefully all the good which I have been taught; and more is to be expected from those who take thought than from those who forget. But whatever success or good fortune I may have in the practice, I delight to learn while I have the opportunity. Now I still have some subjects in mind which I wish to inquire about, but I am going to ask your consent to a

discussion before I bring up the questions in which I am now interested; and when I have presented these, I shall await your answers.

Father. When we last met and talked about the doings and mode of living of merchants, we mentioned, I believe, most of the things that were in real need of discussion; and I feel sure that no man will have ill repute from his conduct who everywhere observes with care what was then brought out. But if you still wish and are anxious to make further inquiries into these matters, I shall be glad to answer, if I can. And even if you wish to open another discussion, I shall also be glad to answer, as far as I have knowledge. You have permission, therefore, to ask just as you like; and on my side there shall be such replies as God enables me to give.

Son. The talk that I last heard you give concerning the business of merchants was delivered with more evident wisdom in the answers than in the questions; and I shall now let that subject rest. As I have in mind, with your permission, to try that business, it may be that a very long time will pass between our conversations. And when I am far away from you, I shall have no opportunity to seek your advice, though I should wish to do so, in case my mind should turn to some craft or business other than that of the merchant's trade. But though, God willing, we may meet again in good health, it seems to me advisable to ask about those things that I am interested in, while I have sure opportunity to learn. And while there is opportunity we should learn what we do not know, for this reason es-

pecially, that we cannot be sure of a chance to inquire when it seems most needful to seek knowledge. Now after having learned the trader's mode of living and how to travel in unknown lands, it might happen that I should want to visit the king's court, where I could see more perfect manners than those to be seen on my commercial tours; and therefore I should like to learn from you, while here at home, such manners as are most needful to know, when one is at court, though it is not sure that I shall have to use them. Now if such an interest does not seem worthless to you, I should like to have you inform me as to those customs that I have mentioned.

Father. It cannot be called worthless curiosity to wish to know what customs prevail and must be observed at the king's court; for all courtesy and proper conduct have their origin there, if the mode of life is as it ought to be and as it was ordained of old. Still, customs at court are by no means of one sort only, for there is a multitude of services and offices about the king, and those of his men who are less in rank are usually not held to strict manners. Those who are higher in the service often differ much in manners and deportment, so that the men who observe the better customs are, unfortunately, fewer, as a rule, than those who are moderately courteous, or scarcely so much. Now I do not know whose conduct you are interested in, that of the more mannerly or of the greater number.

XXV

THE IMPORTANCE OF COURTESY IN THE ROYAL SERVICE

Son. It would be most profitable both for me and for all others who are interested in unfamiliar subjects, whether good breeding or other knowledge, to learn what is best and most useful. For there are but few masters who can teach such things, and they are all more difficult to grasp than those subjects which are of but slight value or wholly worthless. Now since I hear that there are differences both in the duties of men and in the customs of the court, I shall ask you to inform me as to the regulations there and to explain how the services differ and what belongs to each; also to point out the customs which seem good to you and which are surely needful to learn, if one wishes to serve a king with honor, as well as those which one who wishes to be reputed a moral man should shun and beware of. I have this reason, too, for seeking this information so earnestly, that I have seen men come from a king's household, whose conduct I have noted carefully, most of whom seemed only about as well bred as those who had never been at court, or even less than they. Now I do not know which is the more likely, whether I do not understand what good breeding means, or that the facts are as they seemed to me.

Father. If it should be your fate to serve at court and you wish to be called courtly and polite, you will need to beware of what happens to those who come to court without manners and leave without refinement. But since you have asked how the services and the usages

at a royal court differ, I shall now explain that to you, and also show why some return thence rude and unpolished. When a dull man fares to court, it is as when an ignorant fellow travels to Jerusalem, or a simpleton enters a good school. An ignorant man who has been to Jerusalem believes himself well informed and tells many things about his journey, though chiefly what seems worthless to a knowing man, or mere sport and foolery. In the same way the simpleton who comes from school believes himself to be perfectly educated; he struts about and shows great disdain whenever he meets one who knows nothing. But when he meets one who is a real scholar, he himself knows naught. So it is, too, when stupid men come to the king's court: they promptly seek out men of their own kind and learn from them such things as are most easily grasped and into which they had gotten some insight earlier; but this is mere folly and un wisdom. And when they return from court, they will display such manners and courtesy as they learned there. And yet, many who come from strange places, whether from other lands or courts, will behave in this way; but when those who have remained at home find that these men bring great tidings, they come to regard them at once as thoroughly informed, both as to customs and happenings, seeing that they have visited alien peoples and foreign lands; and this is most often the case with dull men. Now if you aim at good breeding, beware lest you fall into such un wisdom. We may now take up the question how the duties of the men at court differ and what belongs to each service.

All the men who have gone to the king's hand * are housecarles; but honors and authority are distributed among them according to the merits of each and as the king wishes to grant. Thus one class of housecarles is made up of men who are always present at court, but draw no wages, and do not eat and drink where the *hird-men* take their meals. They have to do such service in the king's garth as the steward shall assign, whether it be to go on a journey or to do manual labor in the garth.

XXVI

THE ADVANTAGES DERIVED FROM SERVICE
IN THE KING'S HOUSEHOLD

Son. I pray you, sire, not to regard me as thoughtless or as wishing to interrupt your discourse, if I inquire briefly about the duties of these men.

Father. While we are on this subject, you had better ask what you like, or you may regret it later, having come away ill informed about what you wanted to hear, because you did not inquire sufficiently.

Son. Since those whom you have just mentioned live by labor and manual toil in the king's garth and have no greater honors than at home in the country, what advantage do they find in being with the king more than in serving their parents or kinsmen in the country or engaging in trade and winning wealth in that way ?

Father. There are many reasons why such men would rather be at court than live in the country or engage in

* To go to the king's hand (*ganga konungi til handa*) is the technical term for the formal initiation into the royal service. "The king was in his high-seat with his guard grouped about him; across his knees lay a sword, his right

trade. Some prefer being at court to living in the country (though in the king's service their labor is as burdensome, or more so) because, though they are of excellent kinship, they have little wealth and cannot engage in trade on account of their poverty. If they take up work in the country, they find many who have more wealth, though they are no higher in kinship, or scarcely so high. And when quarrels arise, the rich find protection in their wealth and thrust the poor aside, so that these can get no justice in their law suits. Consequently such men think it better to toil in security at court than without protection in the country. Others may have committed manslaughter or have come into other difficulties which make it urgent for them to seek security in the king's power. Some there are, too, who always find pleasure in being in a throng; they also feel more secure there, whatever may happen. When these come back to the country where earlier they seemed so utterly defenseless, they regard themselves as the peers of every one, because of the protection which they enjoy as kinsmen. If one of them is slain in single combat, the king will take forty marks * in thegn money † for him as for

hand grasping the hilt. The candidate approached, knelt, touched the sword-hilt, and kissed the royal hand. He then arose and took the oath of fealty. Kneeling once more he placed his folded hands between those of the king and kissed his new lord." Larson, "The Household of the Norwegian Kings in the Thirteenth Century:" *American Historical Review*, XIII, 461.

* The mark as a standard of value was widely used in the middle ages. Originally it was a measure of weight equivalent to eight ounces of gold or silver. Its value varied at different times and in different places. Dr. Gjerset estimates the purchasing power of a mark of silver in the fourteenth century as equal to that of \$80 at the present time. *History of the Norwegian People*, II, 18-19, note.

† Thegn money (*þegnild*) was a fine paid to the king by one who had been guilty of manslaughter.

his other thegns, and, in addition, one mark gold as housecarle fine,* which he exacts whenever a housecarle is slain.

You shall also know that many come to court from the country who were considered of little consequence there; and yet, it often happens that the king gives high honors to such men in return for their service, if they perform it well, though they are but slightly honored in their own homes. Those, on the other hand, whom the cotters in the country seemed to value highly for their wealth, kindred, and fellowship, are often no more regarded at the royal court than in their home communities and sometimes even less. Indeed, those who come to the king with riches are often honored less than those who come in poverty. Frequently, men who come to court with little wealth or none at all and have no choice but to accept what the king graciously offers are set so high in riches and power that they tower above their kinsmen, though before they came to the king they were not regarded as their equals. They win this either by bravery in warfare and good deportment at court, or by being faithful to the king in all things and striving to be discreet and loving toward him. For the king helps and promotes those whom he finds to be anxious to remain truly affectionate toward him and to serve him in loyal friendship. For these reasons a king by an act of grace, will very often exalt those who are lacking in riches; and therefore many such are encouraged to seek service at court, where they all expect to win rewards, high honors, and marked advancement in position.

* The housecarle fine was higher than that exacted for the death of a common subject because the housecarle stood in a personal relation to the king.

XXVII

THE VARIOUS CLASSES AMONG THE KINGSMEN

Son. I believe I have now had correct and adequate answers, and it no longer seems strange to me that such men as you have just talked about would rather be kingsmen than remain in the country, even though their duties are as toilsome as those of the farmer, or even more so. But now I wish to ask you to describe the other services at the king's court, so that I may, if possible, gain some knowledge of every one of them.

Father. That is surely possible, and since you are interested in such matters, I shall give you what information I have concerning them. There are certain other housecarles at the king's court, who, in addition to the housecarle's title, have a by-name and are called "gests." * They have this name from their manifold duties; for they visit the homes of many, though not always with friendly intent. These men are also in the king's pay and get half the wages of "hirdmen." These are the duties that belong to the office of these men: they serve as spies throughout the king's domain to make sure whether he has any enemies in his kingdom; and if such are found, the gests are to slay them, if they are able to do so. But if the king sends his gests upon his enemies and those against whom they are sent are slain, they are to have for their trouble as much of the enemies' wealth as they can carry away at the time, only no gold, for that is the king's, as is all the rest that the gests are unable to bring away. And whenever the king

* See *American Historical Review*, XIII, 469-471.

becomes aware of an enemy, it is the gest's duty to pursue the foeman and thus to cleanse the realm. Whenever they are present at court, they keep the various watches about the king, just as the others do who share the king's bounty in the royal garth, except the headward; * this they do not keep; nor do they sit at table to eat or drink in the house where the king dines with his hirdmen, except at Christmas and Easter, when they are to eat with the hirdmen in the king's hall, but at no other time. If any of these men be slain in single combat, the king exacts as large a fine both in thegn money and housecarle fine as for the death of those whom we discussed earlier.

There is still another class of royal housecarles who do not share the king's tables and but rarely come to court; these receive nothing from the king but protection and support in securing justice from others; but these, too, are kingsmen. In case any of these are slain, the king exacts the same housecarle fine in addition to the thegn money as in the case of those housecarles who dine at his tables. These men come into his service from various walks of life: some are peasants, some merchants, and some laymen. But this service they owe the king before all his other subjects, namely, that wherever the king's officials come at his command to present the king's causes or business, and these housecarles of whom we are speaking are present, they must join the retinue of these officials and render such assistance as they can in all the king's business. These, too, may claim support

* The head-ward was stationed near the king's person, usually outside the door of the chamber where he slept. See *American Historical Review*, XIII, 462.

from the kingsmen in their efforts to obtain justice, wherever they have suits to bring up. Likewise if any of these men are slain, the fines due the king will be increased as much as for those whom we spoke of earlier.

There is another class of royal housecarles who receive money payments from the king, some twelve *aura*,* some two marks, some three marks, and others more, in proportion as the king finds them likely to add to his strength and credit. These men do not dine with the king at court; they are abroad in the realm in a sort of official capacity, for some of them are sons of the king's landedmen,† while others are peasants, though so wealthy that they seem to rank with the landedmen. These royal housecarles owe the king the same kind of service as those whom we have just mentioned, but more, inasmuch as they have greater prestige and enjoy greater favors from the king; and the fines due the king in case these men are ill used will be increased about as much as has been stated before. From all these kingsmen that we have now told about, who do not dine at his tables, the king may demand such service as he finds each capable of: some are called to pilot the longships when the king sets out on a naval campaign; some are sent abroad in embassies to foreign rulers and other princes; while others are sent out upon the sea as traders

* The *Eyrir* (pl. *aura*, from Latin *aurum* ?) was an ounce of silver, or one-eighth of a mark.

† The landedman (*lendir maðr*) was one who enjoyed a fief granted by the king. The term was also used in a more restricted sense for the local chieftains who in return for the fief enjoyed gave certain assistance in the local administration. See *Norges Gamle Love*, V, 396-397; Gjerset, *History of the Norwegian People*, I, 387-388; *American Historical Review*, XIII, 467-468.

with the king's wares or ships.* These are the duties that they are bound to perform with such other duties as may arise out of the king's needs.

Now I have told you about several classes of the king's servants, and you will have to determine which of those enumerated seem to you most likely to know much about courtly behavior and the manners that ought by right to be found at a king's court; they are all kingsmen, however. And from this you will observe that every man cannot become perfect in all courtly customs and manners just as soon as he sees the king and his men; for a man will have to be both quick-witted and quick to learn, who, if he lacks in breeding, is to learn perfect courtliness in a year's time, even though every day of the year is spent at court among the hirdmen in the king's own presence. Now you shall know this of a truth, that there are many at court who have spent a large part of their lives there and have daily opportunities to see good deportment, and yet they never become either courtly or well-bred.

XXVIII

THE HONORED POSITION OF THE KINGSMEN

Son. If such is the case, that some of the customs at court are so difficult to learn that both quick wit and continued observation are necessary, it seems evident that the men whom you have just now spoken of can

* The kings of medieval Norway seem to have engaged quite actively in the mercantile profession. The trade with the Finns was made a royal monopoly at least as early as the tenth century; later the trade with Greenland also passed into the king's hands.

have but slight knowledge of what constitutes deportment or good manners in the king's house, though they be kingsmen, since they come but rarely into those of the royal apartments where good manners must especially be observed. But there is yet something that I am anxious to know concerning the duties of those men of whom you spoke last: what profit can such men as have an abundance of wealth and kinsmen find in the king's service and in binding themselves to his service with the housecarle name as their only title? Why do not they rather seek the honor of being called hirdmen, or remain at home looking after their property as other husbandmen do?

Father. I should say that you have not inquired very wisely into this matter; still, as you do not appear to be well informed on this subject, I think it better for you to question than to remain ignorant, and since you have inquired I ought to answer. There are many reasons, as we have already said, why men would rather be kingsmen than be called by the peasant's name only. The first reply must be that the king owns the entire kingdom as well as all the people in it, so that all the men who are in his kingdom owe him service whenever his needs demand it. Thus the king has a right to call upon every freeman, who seems fitted for it or is found to possess suitable insight, to serve in embassies to foreign lords; likewise, when the king calls upon the freemen to pilot his ship in warfare, each one who is appointed must attend, though he be the king's henchman only so far as he is his subject. Even if a king should order a clerk or a bishop of his kingdom to fare as envoy to another

king or to the pope, if such is his wish, the one who is called must set out, unless he is willing to risk the king's enmity and to be driven from the kingdom.

Now since all the men of the realm are thus bound to the royal service, why should not every sensible man regard it a greater advantage to be in the king's full protection and friendship, no matter what may happen in his intercourse with other men, and to be superior to his comrades and hold them loyal to the king if they will not otherwise obey, than to be called a mere cotter who is constantly under the control of others, though he still owes nearly the same duties as otherwise ? Verily you must know that to be called a king's housecarle is not to be despised as a title of derision; but it is a name of great honor to everyone who bears it. For neither landedmen nor hirdmen, though because of some infirmity or because they are tired of warfare they prefer to cultivate an estate in the country, are willing to surrender the housecarle name because of its honor and security. Now if there is any phase of this subject that seems insufficiently inquired into or explained, we may extend the conversation if you wish.

XXIX

THE SUPERIOR ORDER OF KINGSMEN: THE HIRD

Son. This subject has been discussed almost too fully and has been cleared up for me with such good and complete answers that it looks to me as if a man cannot dispense with the king's support, if he wishes to found his cause securely. For the multitude is fickle-minded and

the one unfair toward the other, except those alone to whom God has given wisdom and rectitude; but they are few only and not the mass. However, as there are certain matters relating to the service and manners at court that are still unexplained, I should like to hear you discuss these further, lest I continue ignorant about subjects that I desire to know.

Father. We must now speak about those of the king's housecarles who, if they give proper attention, are best able to acquire knowledge as to what is counted good manners in royal circles. They too, however, differ in character, and those are very often the fewer who should be the more numerous. These kingsmen that we are now to discuss have, in addition to the housecarle name, the title of hirdmen. Some bear that title rightfully, but to many it is a nickname. The one who originated the name placed it on a sound basis; for hirdman means the same as keeper and guardian; and those who wish to possess this title rightfully should be true keepers and guardians both of the king's person and of all his kingship. They should guard the bounds of equity among all the men of the realm, wherever they are present when suits at law are heard. They should also observe good and courtly behavior and every useful custom, for they are at all times nearest the king in all matters. They guard the king's life and person both night and day; they are always about the king at the table when he eats and drinks, at public assemblies, and at all general gatherings, like near kinsmen.

These men ought of right to be addressed as lords by all men who bear lesser titles than they do; for they are,

in a sense, stewards of the realm, if they observe the customs that are suited to their title. They should be chosen from all classes and not from wealthy or distinguished families only; but those who are chosen to this dignity should be perfect in all things, both in ancestry and wealth, and in nobility of mind and courtesy, but above all in conduct. They ought, furthermore, before all others to observe righteousness in every form, so that they may be able to discern clearly what should be loved as belonging to honor and good deportment and what should be shunned as leading to dishonor and shame. For wherever they are present, the eyes of all men are turned upon their manners and behavior; all incline their ears to their words; and all expect, as they ought, to find them so much more excellent than other men in deeds and deportment as they stand nearer the king in service and regard than his other men. And if these men wish by right to enjoy the titles which are given them along with the housecarle name, they must shun vulgarity and rudeness; they must also, more than other men, avoid many things which a foolish desire might suggest. For many things become a disgrace both in words and deeds to well-bred men, which are not a disgrace to the vulgar who behave in that way; wherefore such men must keep watch over their tongues and their behavior.

It also frequently happens that well trained envoys from other lands come to visit the king and his court; and the more polished they are, the more carefully they observe the royal service as well as the manners of the king and his courtiers and all the customs that prevail

at the court. On returning to their own lands, they will describe the customs and relate the happenings which they saw or heard at the court to which they were sent. But all the rumors that travel to other lands and are circulated about a lord, if they be truthful, will usually either bring him ridicule and contumely or be turned to his honor. It may also frequently come to pass that the kings themselves need to meet in conference to discuss such rules and arrangements as must be kept jointly by the kingdoms.* Wherever kings meet, there the best men are always assembled; for the kings bring their chief men with them to such conferences: archbishops, bishops, earls, landedmen, and hirdmen or knights. And the conduct and breeding of those who assemble are carefully noted, first the manners of the mighty ones, and then those of all the rest; for everyone watches closely the behavior of all the others. And if one of the kings or one of his principal men is found indecorous, he soon becomes the subject of ridicule and contempt and is regarded as a common churl. And if a king's retinue is found to be poorly trained and is lacking in polish, especially if the service of the king's apartments is not performed in a comely and proper manner, then the king himself is pronounced unfit; for it will be held that if he himself were polite and perfect in manners, all would acquire good breeding from him. Consequently it is possible for a courtly chief to suffer great shame from a vulgar and indecent man; wherefore it is very

* Such meetings of two or three of the kings of the North were occasionally held all through the later middle ages. The conferences were often held at some point near the mouth of the Göta River, on the southwest coast of modern Sweden. See above, p. 30.

important that those who wish to bear a comely and honorable title in the royal presence should be well informed as to what is becoming or unbecoming. For one cannot hope for great honors from a king, if he has at any time disgraced him where many honorable men were assembled and where it seemed very important to maintain the king's honor, which is everywhere, for a king must nowhere suffer shame. Heedlessness and evil conduct are therefore ill becoming to a man, if they bring him shame and enmity and cause him to lose his honorable name, his good repute, and his fair service, even though life and limb be spared. And he can even bring such deep dishonor upon his king that with many of his kindred he will be made to suffer a well deserved but ignominious death. Such grades there are both in the duties and in the titles at the royal court as you have now heard described. But if it seems to you that everything has not yet been thoroughly examined, you may inquire further, if you like.

XXX

HOW A MAN WHO WISHES TO APPLY FOR ADMISSION TO
THE ROYAL HOUSEHOLD SERVICE
SHOULD APPROACH THE KING

Son. It seems to me that we should not fail to continue this discussion and I shall now direct my remarks and questions toward some theme that may help me to see more clearly how one, who comes to seek honors, should appear in the king's presence and how he must afterwards demean himself in order to attain all those

distinctions of which you have just told. Now it may happen that I shall want to fare to court and join the king's service; for since my father and my kinsmen served the king before me and gained honor and high esteem for their service, it is likely that I shall wish to do what my kinsmen achieved before me. Now inasmuch as that is likely, I want to ask you to tell me how I ought to begin my speech when I come to seek audience with a king. State it as clearly as if you were to accompany me to the royal presence, and inform me as to my gestures, my dress, my manner of speech and all matters of deportment that are becoming in the king's company. Now this time I have asked as I thought best; but even though I have inquired less wisely than I ought, kindly do as before, giving thought to the questions on my part and to the replies from your side.

Father. Your questions on this subject are not so unwise that one may not very well answer them; for many have need to make such inquiries, if they mean to have their suits brought up before lords and to have them planned as carefully as need be. Now I shall try to clear up these matters that you have asked about, stating what seems most truthful and advisable. When you come, then, to where the king resides, intending to become his man, you should inquire carefully who the men are in the king's company that are best able to present men's business to the king in such a way that their speeches please him the most. As soon as you have learned who they are, you must first make their acquaintance and cultivate their friendship; after that make your errand known and ask them to undertake

your suit. If they undertake your business, they can best find time and occasion for audience and speech with the king, as they often have speech with him. If you are to present your request at a time when the king is at the table, get sure information whether he is in good spirits and pleasant humor. If you should observe that his disposition is somewhat irritable, or that he is displeased about something, or that he has such important affairs to consider that you think your business for that reason cannot be taken up, then let your suit rest for the time being and seek to find the king in better humor some other day. But if you find that he is in merry mood and has no business to take up of such importance that you may not very well state your errand, wait, nevertheless, till he has nearly finished his meal.

Your costume you should plan beforehand in such a way that you come fully dressed in good apparel, the smartest that you have, and wearing fine trousers and shoes. You must not come without your coat; and also wear a mantle, the best that you have. For trousers always select cloth of a brown dye. It seems quite proper also to wear trousers of black fur, but not of any other sort of cloth, unless it be scarlet. Your coat should be of brown color or green or red, and all such clothes are good and proper. Your linen should be made of good linen stuff, but with little cloth used; your shirt should be short, and all your linen rather light. Your shirt should be cut somewhat shorter than your coat; for no man of taste can deck himself out in flax or hemp. Before you enter the royal presence be sure to have your

hair and beard carefully trimmed according to the fashions of the court when you join the same. When I was at court it was fashionable to have the hair trimmed short just above the earlaps and then combed down as each hair would naturally lie; but later it was cut shorter in front above the eyebrows. It was the style at that time to wear a short beard and a small moustache; but later the cheeks were shaved according to the German mode; * and I doubt that any style will ever come which is more becoming or more suitable in warfare.

Now when you seem to be in proper state to appear before the king both as to dress and other matters, and if you come at a suitable time and have permission from the doorkeeper to enter, you must have your coming planned in such a way that some capable servant can accompany you. But though you are both allowed to enter, do not let him follow you farther than inside the door or, at the farthest, up to the staller's seat, and leave him there to keep your mantle. Leave your mantle behind when you go before the king and be careful to have your hair brushed smooth, and your beard combed with care. You must have neither hat nor cap nor other covering on your head; for one must appear before lords with uncovered head and ungloved hands, with a blithe face and with limbs and body thoroughly bathed. You should also have the men with you who are to present your suit. Form the habit of holding your head up and your whole body erect when walking; strike a dignified gait, but do not walk too slowly.

* It is impossible to determine what style of beard this *jačarskegg* was; if we may judge from contemporary German illustrations, the German mode was a smooth-shaven face. See also Weiss, *Kostumekunde*, II, 581.

When you come into the king's presence, bow humbly before him and address him in these words: "God give you a good day, my lord king!" If the king is at the table when you appear before him, be careful not to lean against the king's board, as so many a simpleton does; and above all do not lean forward across it as unmannerly churls do, but remain standing far enough away from it so that the service belonging to the royal table may have sufficient space to pass between the table and yourself. But if the king is not at the table, approach his seat only so near as to leave abundant space for all the service between yourself and the footstools that are before the king's seat. When standing before the king, you should dispose of your hands in such a way that the thumb and forefinger of the right will grasp the left wrist; and then let your hands drop slowly before you as seems most comfortable. Thereupon the men chosen for that purpose shall present your errand to the king. And if fortune allows your suit to prosper immediately according to your wishes, you shall go to the king's hand and thereafter enter the fellowship of the hird according to the customs which those who plead your case will teach you. But if the king makes promise and fixes a day when you are to appear and the matter is to be settled, it must rest till that time. If the king postpones the decision, saying as is not unlikely: "I know nothing about this man, either as to repute or manners, and cannot reply at once to his request but must first observe clearly his ways of thinking and doing;" then the matter is closed for the time being. But you may, if you are so disposed, con-

tinue your suit and try to find a more convenient time, when your affairs may have a more favorable outcome. However, while you are seeking to gain the king's favor, you will need above all to keep close to the best and most discreet men, and you should often be seen in the company of those who are dearest to the king. But pay all the necessary outlay out of your own means, however long this probation may last, unless you should sometime be invited by the king's order to his tables. And let it not be true in your case as is true in the case of many an unwise man, that the more often you find yourself invited, the more you begin to long for another's fare, lest upright men come to regard you as selfish and impertinent, and those become hostile who were formerly your friends and comrades. Walk uprightly, therefore, and be heedful in all such matters, lest evil befall you through lack of foresight.

XXXI

WHY ONE SHOULD NOT WEAR A MANTLE
IN THE ROYAL PRESENCE

Son. If you permit, I will ask to be allowed a few words in this discussion. On what do you base your statement that it is considered good deportment among princes for a man to come bareheaded and without a mantle when he comes to seek audience with them. If anyone did thus in the country, the mob would say that the man was a fool to run about in that way without a cloak like a ninny.

Father. I told you a little earlier in our conversation that many a man goes about in ignorance as to what is

fitting in a king's house, because many things look stupid to the multitude which are considered proper in the presence of kings and other great men. Now you shall know of a truth, not only that it is fitting to come without a mantle when one appears for the first time before a king, but also that in many places it is as proper to wear one's mantle in the royal presence as to leave it off. But since you have asked the reason why it should seem more decorous to appear before princes without one's mantle than to wear it, it might be a more than sufficient answer to say that it is the custom wherever well bred men appear in the presence of mighty lords to come without a mantle, and that whoever is ignorant of that custom is there called a churl.

But these facts may serve as an additional answer: if a man appears before magnates wrapped in his cloak, he shows in that way that he regards himself as an equal to them in whose presence he is; for he comes clad in all his finery like a lord, and acts as if he need not serve any one. But if he lays aside his cloak, he shows that he is ready for service, if the one who is entitled to receive rather than to do service is willing to accept it. Likewise there are instances of this other fact, which often necessitates caution, that many are envious of a king; and if his enemy is rash and bold, he can indeed come before the king with hidden perils and murderous weapons, if he is allowed to wear his mantle; but he cannot easily accomplish this if he comes without his cloak. It is therefore evident that he was a wise man who first ordained the formality that a man should appear without a mantle before great lords and especially

before kings. For that custom has since led to greater security against secret treason which could easily be hidden under the cloak, if it were worn. The custom has also promoted fair dealing and concord among men, for in this matter they all enjoy the same rights; and this being the accepted custom, one is not suspected or searched more than others.

XXXII

RULES OF SPEECH AND CONVERSATION
IN THE KING'S HALL

Son. Although this custom seemed strange to me before I heard your comment, it now looks as if it were founded on good sense and is not to be dispensed with; and therefore it will be well if you will continue to recount and point out to me all the forms of speech and conduct which one needs to observe in the presence of kings and other great men.

Father. Keep carefully in mind, while in the king's presence, that you ought not to engage in conversation with other men and thus fail to pay heed to everything that the king says, lest it happen, if he addresses a remark to you, that you have to ask what he said. For it always looks ill for one to be so inattentive that the words spoken to him must be repeated before he can hear; and it looks particularly bad in the presence of important men. Still, it can very often come to pass, when one is in a lord's presence, that other men crowd about him and ask questions of many sorts; sometimes this is due to the stupidity of those who do thus, but

often the reason may be that he who acts in this way would not be displeased if something should be found to be censured in him who has a plea to make.

Now if it should happen while you are standing before a king that some one in the meantime should try to address a question or other remark to you, have friendly words ready on your lips and reply in this wise: "Wait a moment, my good man, while I listen a while to what the king says; later I shall be pleased to talk with you as long as you wish." If he still tries to have further words with you, speak no more to him then until the king has finished his remarks. If it now should happen that the king has a few words to say to you, be very careful in your answer not to use plural terms in phrases that refer to yourself, though you do use the plural, as is proper, in all phrases referring to the king. But even more you need to beware of what fools frequently do, namely using the plural in phrases referring to yourself, while you employ the singular in those that refer to the king. And if the king should happen to speak a few words to you which you did not catch, and you have to ask what he said, do not say "Eh?" or "What?" or make a fuss about it, but use only the word "Sire;" or if you prefer to ask in more words: "My lord, be not offended if I ask what you said to me, but I did not quite catch it." But see to it that it happens in rare cases only that the king need to repeat his remarks to you more than once before you grasp them.

XXXIII

THE PROPER USES OF "YOU" AND "THOU"

Son. On what ground is it thought better to phrase all remarks addressed to lords in the plural than in the singular? When one directs a prayer to God, Who is higher and more excellent than all others, the expressions that refer to Him are all phrased in the singular; for everyone who makes his prayer to God speaks in this wise: "Almighty God, my Lord, hear Thou my prayer and be Thou more merciful toward me than I deserve." But I hear no one form his words in this wise: "My Lord, hear my prayer and deal better with me because of Your mercy than I deserve." Now I am not sure that my question is a very wise one; still, since you have allowed me to ask whatever I desire to know, I shall look for an informing reply as before, even though I ask like a child.

Father. I shall indeed be glad to explain everything to you as far as I am able; but I do not see why you are searching into this matter so closely that one shall even have to give reasons for the choice of terms in holy prayer. For the teachers of the church are far better able to interpret matters that belong to divinity than I. But since every question looks toward a reply, I shall explain this to you in a few words, as it seems most reasonable to me; and I shall take up first what seems to me the most important. Now I believe the terms used in sacred prayers are chosen so that we call upon the divine name in the singular rather than in the plural, in order that all who believe in God may clearly under-

stand that we believe in one true God and not in numerous idols like the heathen who formerly called upon seven gods. For they held that one god ruled the heavens; another, the heavenly bodies; a third, the earth and its fruits; a fourth, the sea and its waters; a fifth, the air and the winds; a sixth, learning and eloquence; a seventh, death and hell. Now we should honor the one true God Whom all creation serves and call upon Him in singular terms, lest false gods obtain our worship, if when calling upon the divine name we use plural terms, as if there were more than one God. There is this added reason, that simple-minded folk may conclude that there are more gods than one if His name be invoked in plural terms. Thus it is rightfully and wisely ordered, so that a simple and holy faith shall have no cause to stray away from the true highway. Now if you do not fully grasp this speech, we shall find more to say; but if it has led you to clearer insight, we may as well direct our thoughts to the other matters that you have asked about.

XXXIV

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED

Son. These things seem very clear to me and it appears both reasonable and necessary that one should use the singular rather than the plural in addressing God, lest the true faith be debased by the use of plural expressions and the cunning adversaries obtain the worship that a simple and true faith refuses them. But now I wish to have you turn to what I asked about the mighty men of this world, and explain why it seems better to address them in plural than in singular terms.

Father. It might be a sufficient answer to state that it seems better to address princes in plural than in singular terms for the reason that well-bred people have found it so from the beginning; and it has since become a custom among all discreet and courteous men, and is done in honor of those who are addressed and are entitled to a deferential mode of address. But this is the thought which they had in mind who originated these expressions, that men of power are not like all others who have only themselves and their households to care for and are responsible for a few men only. For chieftains are responsible for all those who are subject to them in service or authority, and they have not only one man's answer on the tongue but have indeed to answer for many. And when a good chief departs this life, it is not as if one man is lost, but it is a great loss to all those who received support and honors from him; and they seem to be of less consequence after they have lost their chief than before while he was living, unless one shall come into his stead who will be as gracious to them as the departed one was. Now since great lords both maintain the honor of many and have great cares and liabilities on their account, it is surely proper to honor them by using the plural forms of address in all speech that those who are humbler and of less consequence may have to address to them. But there remain those things which were learned or thought of when this custom was first ordained: that kings and other powerful men are not alone in their deliberations but are associated with many other wise and distinguished men; and therefore, when a chief is addressed in plural terms, it may be thought

that the words are not addressed to the king alone, but also to all those who sit in his councils as his advisers.

In my last speech I also mentioned that you must have care never to use the plural in expressions referring to yourself, lest you seem to regard yourself as on an equality with the one to whom you are speaking, if he is of higher rank than you are. And even when you talk with an equal or with a humbler man than you are, it is not fitting for you to honor yourself with plural terms. You must also beware when in the presence of princes, lest you become too verbose in your talk; for great lords and all discreet men are displeased with prolixity and regard it as tedious and worthless folly. Further, if you have a matter to present, whether it concerns yourself or others, present it clearly but with quick utterance and in the fewest possible words; for constantly there comes before kings and other lords such a great mass of business respecting the manifold needs of their subjects, that they have neither time nor inclination to hear a case discussed in a long, detailed speech. And it is very evident that, if a man is clever and fluent in speech, he will find it easy to state his case in a few rapidly spoken words, so that the one who is to reply will grasp it readily. Then, too, if one is not an orator and, even more, is awkward in speech, the briefer the errand on his tongue, the better it is; for a man can somehow manage to get through with a few words and thus conceal his awkwardness from those to whom it is unknown. But when a man makes an elaborate effort, he will surely seem the more unskilful the longer he talks.

Now such things there are and others like them into which a man, if he wishes to be called well-bred, must get some insight and which he ought to learn at home before he goes very often to have conversation with great lords. And from all this you will see how courtly and cultured they ought to be in their manners and conduct who are constantly to be near a king in all manner of honorable intercourse, since it has appeared to knowing men as if one is scarcely prepared to come into the king's presence to converse with him unless he has mastered all these things that we have now talked about, except he should be a perfect boor, and not to be reckoned or classed among well-bred people but among the very churls. Still, you must know this, too, that there are many who have spent a long time at court, and know but little or nothing about these things. And this is true of those who bear the hirdman's name and should be very close to the king, as well as of those who have lesser titles and rarely see the king. It must have been of such as these last mentioned that you spoke earlier in our conversation when you remarked that those who came from the court seemed no more polished or cultured, or even less, than those who had never been at court. To that I replied, and with truth, that everyone who wishes to be proper in his conduct needs to guard against such ignorance as they are guilty of, who know not the meaning of shame or honor or courtesy, and learn nothing from the conduct of good and courtly men, even though they see it daily before their eyes.

XXXV

CONCERNING FAILURE OF CROPS AND DEARTH IN
MORALS AND GOVERNMENT

Son. It is a fact that I have met some who, though they came from court, either concealed the sort of manners that you have now discussed, if they knew them, or had, as I remarked, never gained insight into such matters. Now it is not strange that those who remain at home in ignorance or are not of an inquiring mind know little or nothing about such things; but it is more to be wondered at, as you have just said, that many remain a long time with the king and close to him in service, and still do not learn either what courtesy means or what courtly manners are. Therefore, since you have warned me to beware of such ignorance, I want to ask you how this can be and how a king who is well-bred and courteous can be willing to keep men about his person to serve him, who refuse to live according to good manners. For I have thought that, if a king is courteous and refined, all would imitate him in decorum, and that he would not care much for churlish men.

Father. It may happen sometimes that a husbandman who is accustomed to eat good bread and clean food has to mix chaff or bran with his flour so as to make his bread and that of his household last longer than common; and at such times he must, though reluctant, partake of such food as is set before him in the same thankful spirit as earlier, when he was given good and clean food; and such cases result from grinding necessity, that is, from crop failures. But scarcity arises in

many ways. Sometimes there is dearth of grain, even when the earth continues to yield grass and straw, though at times it gives neither. There are times, too, when the earth gives good and sufficient fruitage, and yet no one is profited, for dearth is in the air, and bad weather ruins the crops at harvest time. Sometimes smut * causes trouble, though the crop is plentiful and the weather good. It can also happen at times that all vegetation flourishes at its best, and there is no dearth; and yet there may be great scarcity on some man's farm or among his cattle, or in the ocean, or in the fresh waters, or in the hunting forests. Sometimes when everything goes wrong, it may even come to pass that all these failures occur together; and then bran will be as dear among men as clean flour was earlier, when times were good, or even dearer than that. All these forms of dearth which I have now recounted must be regarded as great calamities in every land where they occur; and it would mean almost complete ruin if they should all appear at the same time and continue for a period of three years.

There remains another kind of dearth which alone is more distressing than all those which I have enumerated: dearth may come upon the people who inhabit the land, or, what is worse, there may come failure in the morals, the intelligence, or the counsels of those who are to govern the land. For something can be done to help a country where there is famine, if capable men are in control and there is prosperity in the neighboring lands. But if dearth comes upon the people or the morals

* *Skjaðak*. The translation is uncertain; possibly some sort of weed is meant.

of the nation, far greater misfortunes will arise. For one cannot buy from other countries with money either morals or insight, if what was formerly in the land should be lost or destroyed. But even though there be failure of harvest on a peasant's farm, which has always been good and which he and his kinsmen before him have owned a long time, he will not take such an angry dislike to it that, caring no longer what becomes of it, he will proceed forthwith to dispose of it; much rather will he plan to garner and store grass and chaff as carefully as he once garnered good and clean grain, or even more so, and in this way provide for his household as best he can, until God wills that times shall improve. In this way, too, a king must act, if he should suffer the misfortune of dearth upon the morals or the intelligence of his realm: he must not renounce the kingdom, but necessity may force him to rate the men of little wit as high as the wise were rated earlier while the kingdom stood highest in prosperity and morals. Sometimes punishment will serve and sometimes prayer; something may also be gained through instruction; but the land must be maintained in every way possible until God wills that times shall improve.

XXXVI

THE CAUSES OF SUCH PERIODS OF DEARTH AND WHAT
FORMS THE DEARTH MAY TAKE

Son. I see clearly now that troubles may befall men in many ways, the mighty as well as the humble, kings as well as cotters. But as you have given me this freedom and have allowed me to question you in our con-

versation, I shall ask you to enlarge somewhat fully upon this speech before we take up another. What is your opinion as to the causes of such a severe dearth as may come upon the minds of men, so that all is ruined at the same time, insight and national morals ? And do you think such losses should be traced to the people who inhabit the realm or to the king and the men who manage the state with him ?

Father. What you have now asked about has its origin in various facts and occurrences of a harmful character. I believe, however, that such misfortunes would rarely appear among the people who inhabit and till the land, if the men who govern the realm were discreet and the king himself were wise. But when God, because of the sins of the people, determines to visit a land with a punishment that means destruction to morals and intellect, He will carry out His decision promptly, though in various ways, as soon as He wills it. Instances of this have occurred frequently and in various places, where trouble has come when a chieftain, who possessed both wealth and wisdom and who had been highly honored by the king, having sat in his council and shared largely with him in the government, departed this life leaving four or five sons in his place, all in their early youth or childhood. Then the king and the whole realm have suffered immediate injury: the king has lost a good friend, an excellent adviser, and a strong bulwark. Next the man's possessions are divided into five parts, and all his projects are disturbed. His household sinks in importance, since each of the sons has but a fifth of all the power that the father derived from his means while he was

living, and has even less of his insight and knowledge of manners, being a mere child. Greater still will the change be if he leaves no son at his decease but as many daughters as I have now counted sons; but the very greatest change will come if neither sons nor daughters survive him; for then it is likely that his possessions will be split up among distant relatives, unless a near kinsman be found.

Now if many such events should occur at one time in a kingdom, vigor would disappear from the king's council, though he himself be very capable. And if it should happen (for there are cases of such events as well as of the others) that a king depart this life and leave a young son who succeeds to the paternal kingdom, though a mere child, and young counsellors come into the places of the old and wise advisers who were before, — if all these things that we have now recounted should happen at one time, then it is highly probable that all the government of the realm would be stricken with dearth, and that, when the government goes to ruin, the morals of the nation would also fail to some extent.

There still remains the one contingency which is most likely to bring on such years of dearth as produce the greatest evils; and unfortunately there are no fewer instances of such issues than of those that we have just mentioned. If a king who has governed a kingdom should happen to die, and leave behind three or four sons, and the men who are likely to be made counsellors be all young and full of temerity, though wealthy and of good ancestry, since they have sprung from families

that formerly conducted the government with the king, — now if a kingdom should come into such unfortunate circumstances as have been described, with several heirs at the same time, and the evil counsel is furthermore taken to give them all the royal title and dignity, then that realm must be called a rudderless ship or a decayed estate; it may be regarded almost as a ruined kingdom, for it is sown with the worst seeds of famine and the grains of unpeace. For the petty kings, having rent the realm asunder, will quickly divide the loyalty of the people who inhabit the land, both of the rich and of the poor; and each of these lords will then try to draw friends about him, as many as he can. Thereupon each will begin to survey his realm as to population and wealth; and when he recalls what his predecessor possessed, each will feel that he has too little. Then the friends, too, of each one will remind him of and tell about how much the king who ruled before him possessed in wealth and numbers and what great undertakings he set out upon; and it seems as if in every suggestion each one tries to urge his lord to seize upon more than he already has. After that these lords begin to treasure those riches that are of the least profit to the kingdom, namely envy: trivial matters are carefully garnered and great wrath is blown out of them. Soon the love of kinship begins to decay; he who was earlier called friend and relative is now looked upon as an evil-doer, for soon each one begins to be suspicious of the others. But when suspicion and evil rumors begin to appear, wicked men think that good times are at hand, and they all bring out their plows. Before long the seeds of hostility begin to sprout,

avarice and iniquity flourish, and men grow bold in manslaying, high-handed robbery, and theft.

Now if it happens that one of these princes should wish to punish the aforesaid vices in his kingdom, the wicked take refuge in the service of some other master; and, though they have been driven from home because of their misdeeds, they pretend to have come in innocence to escape the cruel wrath of their lord. The one to whom they have fled gives protection in temerity rather than in mercy; for he wishes to acquire friends in the other's realm, who may prove useful to himself and hostile to the other in case they should come to disagreement. But those who had to flee because of their evil conduct and lawbreaking soon begin to show hostility toward the lord whose subjects they formerly were and to rouse as much enmity as they can between him and the one to whom they have come. They take revenge for their exile by carrying murder, rapine, and plundering into the kingdom, as if they were guiltless and all the blame lay with the lord. Soon immorality begins to multiply, for God shows His wrath in this way, that where the four boundaries of the territories of these chiefs touch, he places a moving wheel which turns on a restless axle. After that each one forgets all brotherly love, and kinship is wrecked. Nothing is now spared, for whenever the people are divided into many factions through loyalty to different chiefs, and these fall out, the masses will rashly pursue their desires, and the morals of the nation go to ruin. For then everyone makes his own moral code according to his own way of thinking; and no one fears punishment any longer when the rulers fall out and are weakened thereby.

When each one looks only to his own tricks and wiles, great misfortunes of all kinds will come upon the land. Murder and quarrels will multiply; many women will be carried off as captives of war and violated, while others will be ensnared and seduced into fornication; children will be begotten in adultery and unlawful cohabitation. Some take their kinswomen or sisters-in-law, while others seduce wives away from their husbands; and thus all forms of whoredom are committed and degeneracy will come to light in all the generations that are begotten in such immorality. Every form of crime will be committed. Peasants and subjects become defiant and disobedient; they are not careful to avoid crimes, and though they commit many, they atone for few only. Trusting in their own strength and numbers, they attend seditious meetings; and they choose as their part what is likely to bring a dangerous outcome, for they place all men on the same level, the discreet and decent ones with the coarse and stupid, and they screen foolish and iniquitous men from punishment, though these deserve it every day. And this they do either by swearing falsely and giving false witness in their behalf, or by making a foolhardy and crafty defence at the court of trial, so that the guilty have to answer for nothing before the kingsmen who assist the king in carrying out the law. For the unthinking mob seem to imagine that the king was appointed to be their opponent; and a foolish man regards himself fortunate and highly favored in the eyes of thoughtless people, if he can maintain himself for some time in opposition to royal authority and the prescriptions of law. And if

such men have disputes to settle anywhere, the wicked will support the foolish one, so that he may prevail in the controversy; thus the upright and the peaceful are robbed of their dues. If the greedy or the quarrelsome is slain because of his avarice, his stupid kinsmen who survive him will feel that their family has been greatly injured and impaired thereby; and if at some earlier time there was slain one of their family who was both wise and peaceful, and whose wisdom and even temper proved useful to many, and if this one was atoned for with a payment to the kindred, they will now ask as large a fine for the unwise as what was formerly taken for the prudent one; otherwise there will be revenge by man-slaying.

But when God sees that such misjudgments, born of perversity and unwisdom, are decreed, He turns the injustice back upon those who first began to pass unfair and unfounded judgments. For as soon as the foolish or the avaricious sees that he is held in high regard, even more than the wise with his even temper, and that his avarice and folly are turned to honor and advancement, he will do according to his nature and the custom of all foolish men: he will become more grasping and will operate more widely in his greed. And when the mob begins to regard that as worthy of praise and renown which is evil and should be hated by all, the second and the third will learn it and the one after the other, until it becomes common custom; and he alone will be counted a worthy man who is grasping and knows how to detract unjustly from another's honor to his own profit. After that the one deals greedily with the other,

till misfortune turns against the very ones whose folly and wickedness originally began these evil practices. For one will finally bring evil upon another, wounds or other afflictions, and thus all old and lawful ordinances must decay. Now everyone holds that the king and other great lords should temper the severity of the laws with mercy; but none of the commoners seems willing to deal justly with another; indeed, each would rather demand more than what he was entitled to from the beginning. But when all lawful ordinances and right punishments are ignored and unlaw and malice take their place, and this condition becomes so general that God is wearied, He applies the punishment that is able to reach all, since the guilt has touched all. He throws hatred and enmity down among the chiefs who are placed in control of the realm; when things go ill there may also come failure of crops; and the chiefs soon begin to quarrel, for each finds complaints in the other's kingdom, which are finally settled with slaughter and strife.

But whenever famine, murder, and warfare begin to arrive together and visit all those who inhabit the realm, the kingdom will be brought near to utter weakness and ruin, if the period should continue any length of time. Though laws and useful customs may have been observed and maintained to some extent in the times mentioned earlier, they will be wholly forgotten whenever such times appear as those that we have just now described; for in warfare the best men and those of the noblest kinship are destroyed. But failure of crops, rapine, and unpeace of every sort that may then appear will rob those of wealth who are in possession of

it and have acquired it honestly, while he gets it who can most readily deprive others by theft and plunder. And when such a time comes upon a nation, it will suffer loss in good morals and capable men, wealth and security, and every blessing as long as God permits the plague to continue. But He metes out according to His mercy, for He is able to save such a country, when He finds that the people have been sufficiently chastised for their sins. Now you can imagine how highly moral the people will become, if such a nation is saved by God's grace and again brought under the rule of a single monarch, and how prosperous the realm may become in the period immediately following such an unrest as I have just described. For then the kingdom was rent, the morals of the people were confused, and their loyalty was divided among a number of lords, each one of whom was striving to contrive and employ against the others cunning, deception, disloyalty, and evil in every form.*

XXXVII

THE DUTIES, ACTIVITIES, AND AMUSEMENTS OF THE ROYAL GUARDSMEN

Son. It is perfectly evident that if all these misfortunes should befall a kingdom and the period of trouble

* In this chapter the author has summed up the history of Norwegian kingship in the twelfth century, when minorities were frequent and joint kingships almost the rule. Three boys were proclaimed kings in 1103; two kings shared the power in 1130; the royal title fell to three children in 1136. At no time was the realm actually divided, the theory being that the administration and the revenues might be divided, while the monarchy remained a unit. The century was a period of great calamities; pretenders were numerous; and civil war raged at intervals. For a fuller discussion of the theory of Norwegian kingship in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, see above, pp. 35 ff.

were to continue for some time, the realm would decline. There surely must be instances of such an issue, and we may safely conclude that wherever such events come to pass, there will be much evil and manifold misfortunes before they cease. I also see clearly that if the morals or laws of a kingdom are undermined by such troubles as you have described, even though God should purpose to rescue it finally from distress and unpeace and bring it again under one ruler after such troublous times, the people who survive are likely to be both wicked and vicious; and there will surely be need, as you have said, of good instruction and at times even of very severe punishment. Furthermore, even if the kingdom did possess tolerable morals for a time before the unpeace came, he who is to undertake the government, though he be very wise, will need to use great determination and severity for a long period, if the realm is to be replaced on its earlier footing.

I have been deeply interested in your discussion of what may bring the greatest damage to a kingdom (and it may be rendered worthless through loss of morals, population, and wealth, if such conditions should arise); and I have now been sufficiently informed as to how matters may shape themselves, if misfortune means to come; and I see clearly what great losses and damage may follow such events. Now it seems to me that we have dwelt rather long upon facts which must bring distress to everyone who wishes to be reputed a moral man (wherefore all, both rich and poor, should implore the Lord to let no such times come in their days), and I will therefore return to what I began with and ask you to

point out the manners and customs which you think would be becoming to me, if I were employed in the royal service, no matter what times might come, though I will pray the Lord that as long as I live there may be peace and quiet and prosperous times.

Father. No one knows how God will order such things during the days of any man's lifetime. But if a man determines to be a kingsman and there happens to be much distress and many disasters at the time because of too many rulers or unpeace in some form, he must be careful to join the service of the one who has obtained the power in the most legal manner and is most likely to observe the customs that rightful and well-bred kings have observed before his day. He is then least likely to incur danger in accounting for his service, whether he be called to account in this world or in the next. But you have asked what customs you should observe if you were bound to a royal service, and on that point I can very well inform you.

This should be the first principle of all your conduct, never to let your heart be wanting in reverence and fear of God, to love him above everything else, and next to him to love righteousness. Train yourself to be fair, upright, and temperate in all things. Always keep in mind the day of death and guard carefully against vices. Remember that many a man lives but a brief time, while his deeds live long after him; and it is of great importance what is remembered about him. Some have reached fame through good deeds, and these always live after them, for one's honor lives forever, though the man himself be dead. Some win fame by evil deeds

and these men, though they be dead, bear a burden of lasting disgrace when their deeds are recalled; their kinsmen, too, and all their descendants after their days have to bear the same dishonor. Those, however, are most numerous who drop away like cattle and are remembered neither for good nor for evil; but you shall know of a truth that such is surely not the purpose of mankind; for all other creatures were made for the pleasure and subsistence of man, while man was created to enjoy the glories of both this and the other world, if he is to realize the purpose of his creation. Every one, therefore, while he still lives, should strive to leave a few such deeds after him as will cause him to be remembered with favor after he has departed this life. But this is above all the duty of kings and other mighty chiefs and of all those who seek their society and enter their service; for after that a man is no longer looked upon as a churl, but is honored as a governor or a chief; and thus he ought to be honored, if he strives to observe the customs that are becoming to himself and his dignity.

Take heed lest you vacillate in friendship among several chiefs, as fickle men do; for no one who acts thus can be firm in purpose. Love your lord highly and without guile as long as you stay in his service, and never seek the society or the confidence of his enemies, if you wish to remain a man of honor. Above your lord you must love God alone, but no other man. These are the things that you must especially avoid, lest they bring you an evil name: perjury and false testimony, brothels, drinking bouts, except in the king's house or in decent

gatherings, casting dice for silver, lust after bribes, and all other evil covetousness; for these things are a great disgrace to every kingsman in this world and his soul will be in peril in the other world, if he is found guilty of such vices. Never get drunk, wherever you are; for it may fall out at any time that you will be summoned to hear a dispute or to supervise something, or that you will have important business of your own to look after. Now if such demands should come to a man while he is drunk, he will be found wholly incompetent; wherefore drunkenness should be avoided by everyone, and most of all by kingsmen and others who wish to be reputed as worthy men, for such are most frequently called to hear suits at law and to other important duties. Moreover, they ought to set good examples for all, as some may wish to learn decorum from their behavior.

If you are a kingsman you must observe the same prudence in your address and habits, and do not forget this. You should frequently be seen in your lord's presence. Early in the morning you must escort him to church, if he observes that custom, as by right he ought to do; listen attentively to the service while you are in the church, and call devoutly upon God for mercy. When the king leaves the church, join him at once and keep sufficiently near him to be in sight, so that he may be able to call you for any purpose, if he should wish to do so. But do not keep so close to him as to make him feel annoyed by your presence, when he wishes to speak with men whom he has called to converse with him, or to discuss such matters as he wishes to keep secret. Never show an interest in those affairs which you see

that your lord wishes to keep to himself, unless he summons you to share knowledge with him. But if anything should come up that your lord confides to you but wishes to have kept secret, keep it carefully in discreet silence; do not babble about such affairs as should be hidden in your fidelity.

You must also make a habit of going to the royal apartments early in the morning before the king has arisen; but be sure to come carefully washed and bathed and wearing your best raiment; and wait near the king's chamber until he has arisen. Go into the king's chamber if he calls you, but at no other time; but wherever it is that the king summons you, you must come into his presence without your mantle. If it is early in the morning and you have not seen him before, wish him a good day in the words that I have already taught you; but approach only so near as to leave him sufficient room to confer with the men who are nearest to him, and remain standing there. But if he calls you to come nearer, wishing to speak with you in private, then kneel before him but only so near that you can readily hear his words; and come without your mantle. However, if he invites you to be seated, you may put on your cloak, if you like, and be seated where he indicates.

Now when it happens that the king goes out to seek diversion, whether it be in town or in the country, or wherever he is sojourning, and you and your comrades accompany him, the retinue looks best, whether you are armed or not, if you walk in equal numbers on either side of the king, though never in compact groups. Wherever you go he should walk in your midst, and

you and your companions should be arranged in equal numbers before and behind him and on either side. But none of you must walk so near the king that he has not sufficient space to converse with those whom he summons to him, whether he wishes to speak with them openly or in private. And even though he call no one to have speech with him, keep the order such that there is plenty of space around him on all sides. But when the king rides out for amusement and you and your comrades accompany him, arrange the order of riding in the way that I have suggested about your walking; only keep at a greater distance, so that no dirt can splash from your horses upon the king, even though you ride quite rapidly.

If the king should call you by name, be careful not to answer by "Eh ?" or "Hm ?" or "What ?" but rather speak in this wise: "Yes, my lord, I am glad to listen !" Also take good heed not to rush away early in the morning to eat and drink with greedy and unmannerly men. Wait, as custom demands, till the king's meal time, and take your seat at the royal tables, whenever you are present at court. But when the king sits down to eat with his hirdmen, these ought all to observe good manners and decent order, and the one should never run in ahead of the other like an ill-bred man; but each ought to know his right place and table companion; and the men should sit at the table in the same order as when they are out walking. The men should go by twos, those who sit together, to lave their hands, whether the washing is done within the hall or without, and then to the table, each in the order and to the seat

that he knows was assigned to him in the beginning. The hirdmen ought to speak in a low tone at the table so that not a single word will be heard by those who sit on either side of the two who wish to converse; let each one speak to his partner so softly that none shall hear but those who are conversing; then there will be good deportment and quiet in the king's hall. You may, however, partake freely and quickly of both the food and the drink on the table according to your needs without suffering any discredit to your manners; but always take good heed not to get drunk. You should cast frequent glances toward the king's seat to see how his service is going forward, and always note carefully when the king raises the beaker to his lips, for you must not eat while he is drinking. If you have a cup in your hand, set it down and do not drink just then. You must show the queen everywhere the same honor as you show the king according as I have told you. And if the king has a guest at his table who ought to be shown the same deference, whether he be a king, an earl, an archbishop, or a bishop, you should observe these same customs which I have just taught you. However, if the number of distinguished people at the royal table should be large, you need not observe this custom as to drinking unless you wish, except when the king or the queen drinks, or when there is another king at the table with them.

Now if the king's hirdmen happen to be seated together in the royal hall but with no tables before them and certain lords come in whom the king is pleased to receive with honor, it is the duty of all men to rise be-

fore them just as before their own lords and to give them such cordial greetings as they know that the king desires. But this is an honor which every kingsman owes to his fellows: when one who has been absent comes in and walks toward the seat where he has his proper place and position, the two who sit nearest to him on either side should rise, receive him in a friendly manner, and bid him welcome among them. Wherever the kingsmen are much in the eyes of other men, whether they sit together at a feast, or walk in the king's escort, or go out together to make merry, they ought always to speak in rather low tones, to be proper in their actions and elegant in their speech, and to avoid all indecent talk. All these rules which I have now recounted must be learned and observed by all kingsmen who wish to be known for good breeding. But no matter how others behave, be sure that you observe carefully all that I have taught you, and be willing to teach others who may wish to learn from you.

Now if your comrades are planning to go from the king's apartments to some drinking bout or other merry-making, and you, too, have the king's permission to seek diversion, you should prefer the forms of amusement which I shall now point out to you. If you are sojourning where horses may be ridden and you have your own horse, put on heavy armor and, mounting your horse, train yourself in the art of sitting on horseback in the firmest and most handsome manner. Train yourself to press the foot firmly into the stirrup; keep your leg stiff and the heel a little lower than the toes, except when you have to guard against thrusts from the front;

and practice sitting firmly with the thighs pressed close. Cover your breast and limbs carefully with a curved shield. Train your left hand to grasp firmly the bridle and the grip of the shield, and your right hand to direct the spear-thrust so that all your bodily strength will support it. Train your good steed to veer about when in full gallop; keep him clean and in good condition; keep him shod firmly and well, and provide him with a strong and handsome harness.

But if you are in a borough or some such place where horses cannot be used for recreation, you should take up this form of amusement: go to your chambers and put on heavy armor; next look up some fellow henchman (he may be a native or an alien) who likes to drill with you and whom you know to be well trained to fight behind a shield or a buckler. Always bring heavy armor to this exercise, either chain-mail or a thick gambison,* and carry a heavy sword and a weighty shield or buckler in your hand. In this game you should strive to learn suitable thrusts and such counterstrokes as are good, necessary, and convenient. Learn precisely how to cover yourself with the shield, so that you may be able to guard well when you have to deal with a foeman. If you feel that it is important to be well trained in these activities, go through the exercise twice a day, if it is convenient; but let no day pass, except holidays, without practicing this drill at least once; for it is counted

* The gambison (*panzari*) was a form of defensive armor made of cloth padded and quilted. It is described on page 217 as being made "of soft linen thoroughly blackened." Usually it was worn under the coat of mail, but it could also be worn outside. See *Annaler for nordisk Oldkyndighed*, 1867, 74 ff. (Blom.); Falk, *Altnordische Waffenkunde*, 181-182.

proper for all kingsmen to master this art and, moreover, it must be mastered if it is to be of service. If the drill tires you and makes you thirsty, drink a little now and then, enough to quench your thirst; but while the game is on, be careful not to drink till you are drunk or even merry.

If you should like to try a variety of drills and pastimes, there are certain sports that one can take up out of doors, if that is thought more diverting. For one thing, you may have a pole prepared, somewhat heavier than a spear shaft, and put up a mark some distance away for a target; with these you can determine how far and how accurately you can throw a spear and do it effectively. It is also counted rare sport and pastime to take one's bow and go with other men to practice archery. Another pleasant and useful diversion is to practice throwing with a sling both for distance and for accuracy, and with a staff sling * as well as with a hand sling, and to practice throwing stone missiles. Formerly the custom was for all who wished to become expert in such arts and thoroughly proficient in war and chivalry to train both hands alike to the use of weapons. Strive after the same skill, if you find yourself gifted for it, inasmuch as those who are trained in that way are the most perfect in these activities and the most dangerous to their enemies.

You should abhor and avoid manslaying in every form except as a lawful punishment or in common warfare. But in ordinary warfare on the lawful command

* The staff sling was a sling fastened to the end of a stick; it was an earlier form which was not used much in the thirteenth century.

of your chief, you need to shun manslaying no more than any other deed which you know to be right and good. Show courage and bravery in battle; fight with proper and effective blows, such as you have already learned, as if in the best of humor, though filled with noble wrath. Never fight with feigned strokes, needless thrusts, or uncertain shots like a frightened man. Heed these things well that you may be able to match your opponent's skill in fighting. Be resolute in combat but not hot-headed and least of all boastful. Always remember that there may be those who can give good testimony in your behalf; but never praise your own deeds, lest after a time it should come to pass that you are pursued for the slaughter of men whose death is rated a great loss and the revenge is directed toward you by your own words.

If you are fighting on foot in a land battle and are placed at the point of a wedge-shaped column,* it is very important to watch the closed shield line in the first onset, lest it become disarranged or broken. Take heed never to bind the front edge of your shield under that of another.† You must also be specially careful, when in the battle line, never to throw your spear, unless you have two, for in battle array on land one spear is more effective than two swords. But if the fight is on shipboard, select two spears which are not to be thrown, one with a shaft long enough to reach easily from ship

* The wedge-shaped column (*svinfylking*, perhaps so named from a fancied resemblance to a boar's head) was a common form of battle array among the Northern peoples as well as among the early Germans generally.

† As the shield was born on the left arm, the front edge would be the right edge.

to ship and one with a shorter shaft, which you will find particularly serviceable when you try to board the enemy's ship. Various kinds of darts should be kept on ships, both heavy javelins and lighter ones. Try to strike your opponent's shield with a heavy javelin, and if the shield glides aside, attack him with a light javelin, unless you are able to reach him with a long-shafted spear. Fight on sea as on land with an even temper and with proper strokes only; and never waste your weapons by hurling them to no purpose.

Weapons of many sorts may be used to advantage on shipboard, which one has no occasion to use on land, except in a fortress or castle. Longhandled scythes * and long-shafted broadaxes,† “war-beams” and staff slings, darts,‡ and missiles of every sort are serviceable on ships. Crossbows and longbows are useful as well as all other forms of shooting weapons; but coal and sulphur § are, however, the most effective munitions of all that I have named. Caltrops || cast in lead and good halberds ¶ are also effective weapons on shipboard. A tower joined

* These scythes were apparently used to catch and hold the hostile ships and perhaps also to cut the ropes on the ship. See the Sorö edition, 388.

† The broadax (*skeggöx*) had the blade extended backward somewhat like that of a halberd, though in the latter case the extension was usually forward. See Falk, *Altnordische Waffenkunde*, 108-110.

‡ *Skeptifletta*: a dart of some sort with a cord attached.

§ Coal and sulphur seem to have been used chiefly to fire the enemy's ship.

|| Caltrops were instruments provided with iron prongs and were usually scattered where the enemy's horsemen were likely to pass, in the hope of maiming the horses. It is evident that they were also used in naval warfare, the purpose being to maim the men on the enemy's deck. See the Sorö edition, 392.

¶ *Atgeirr*. The translation is doubtful, but it seems clear that some kind of spear useful for striking as well as for thrusting is meant. See Falk, *Altnordische Waffenkunde*, 81-82.

to the mast * will be serviceable along with these and many other defenses, as is also a beam cloven into four parts and set with prongs of hard steel,† which is drawn up against the mast. A “prow-boar”‡ with an ironclad snout is also useful in naval battles. But it is well for men to be carefully trained in handling these before they have to use them; for one knows neither the time nor the hour when he shall have to make use of any particular kind of weapons. But take good heed to collect as many types of weapons as possible, while you still have no need of them; for it is always a distinction to have good weapons, and, furthermore, they are a good possession in times of necessity when one has to use them. For a ship's defense the following arrangement is necessary: it should be fortified strongly with beams and logs built up into a high rampart, through which there should be four openings, each so large and wide that one or two men in full armor can leap through them; but outside and along the rampart on both sides of the ship there should be laid a level walk of planks to stand upon.§ This breastwork must be firmly and

* Probably some sort of a cage placed at the top or near the top of the mast from which men with bows and slings could fight to better advantage. See *Aarbøger for nordisk Oldkyndighed*, 1872, 242; Falk, *Altnordische Waffenkunde*, 197.

† Only one end of the beam was cloven in this way. See the Sorö edition, 394–395. The beam was apparently fastened to the mast and used to crush the sides of the enemy's ship in much the same way as the ram was used against a castle wall. See Falk, *Altnordische Waffenkunde*, 199.

‡ The prow-boar (*röðrgoltr*) was not a beak but apparently some device fastened to the prow which served much the same purpose, namely to run down and sink an opposing ship. See the Sorö edition, 395–396; Falk, *Altnordische Waffenkunde*, 198–199.

§ See the Sorö edition, 397–399; Falk, *Altnordische Waffenkunde*, 196. This rampart was built of logs and planks and raised on the gunwales. Sometimes

carefully braced so that it cannot be shaken though one leaps violently upon it. Wide shields and chain mail of every sort are good defensive weapons on shipboard; the chief protection, however, is the gambison made of soft linen thoroughly blackened, good helmets, and low caps of steel. There are many other weapons that can be used in naval fights, but it seems needless to discuss more than those which I have now enumerated.

XXXVIII

WEAPONS FOR OFFENSE AND DEFENSE

Son. Since we now have before us a discussion which teaches chiefly how a man must prepare himself to meet his enemies in attack and defense, it seems to me that it would be well to say something about how one has to fight on land, on horse or on foot, and in attacking and defending castles. Therefore, if you feel disposed to say anything about such matters, I shall be glad to listen.

Father. The man who is to fight on horseback needs to make sure, as we have already stated, that he is thoroughly trained in all the arts of mounted warfare. For his horse he will need to provide this equipment: * he must keep him carefully and firmly shod; he must also make sure that the saddle is strong, made with high bows, and provided with strong girths and other saddle-

it seems to have been placed along the entire length of the ship, but often, perhaps, only where the ship was lowest. Inside it was braced with strong beams. The plank walk on the outside projected over the edge of the ship and was no doubt in part intended to make it difficult for the enemy to board it.

* On the equipment of the horse in medieval warfare, see *Aarbøger for nordisk Oldkyndighed*, 1867, 90-97.

gear, including a durable surcingle across the middle and a breast strap in front.* The horse should be protected in such a way both in front of the saddle and behind it that he will not be exposed to weapons, spear thrust or stroke, or any other form of attack. He should also have a good shabrack † made like a gambison of soft and thoroughly blackened linen cloth, for this is a good protection against all kinds of weapons. It may be decorated as one likes, and over the shabrack there should be a good harness of mail. With this equipment every part of the horse should be covered, head, loins, breast, belly, and the entire beast, so that no man, even if on foot, shall be able to reach him with deadly weapons. The horse should have a strong bridle, one that can be gripped firmly and used to rein him in or throw him when necessary. Over the bridle and about the entire head of the horse and around the neck back to the saddle, there should be a harness made like a gambison of firm linen cloth, so that no man shall be able to take away the bridle or the horse by stealth.‡

* In the thirteenth century the saddle was made with high bows before and behind so as to provide a firmer seat for the rider. The surcingle was a girth drawn over the saddle; the breast strap served to keep the saddle from slipping backwards. *Aarbøger for nordisk Oldkyndighed*, 91.

† *Kovertur*, from medieval French *couverture*. But the *couverture* was not a covering worn underneath the mail; it was probably the mail itself or an outer covering for the horse. See Falk, *Altnordische Waffenkunde*, 191.

‡ Falk believes that this description is in some respects inaccurate. No such elaborate equipment could have been used in the North where cavalry was not an important part of the host in the thirteenth century. He also doubts that an equipment just like the one described was in use anywhere in Europe at the time. *Ibid.*, 190–191. The medieval *couverture* was not placed beneath the covering of mail as the *Speculum Regale* states; and Falk can see no reason why a gambison placed beneath the mail should be ornamented. It seems clear that the author is somewhat confused as to these various coverings.

The rider himself should be equipped in this wise: he should wear good soft breeches made of soft and thoroughly blackened linen cloth, which should reach up to the belt; outside these, good mail hose* which should come up high enough to be girded on with a double strap; over these he must have good trousers made of linen cloth of the sort that I have already described; finally, over these he should have good kneepieces made of thick iron and rivets hard as steel.† Above and next to the body he should wear a soft gambison, which need not come lower than to the middle of the thigh. Over this he must have a strong breastplate ‡ made of good iron covering the body from the nipples to the trousers belt; outside this, a well-made hauberk and over the hauberk a firm gambison made in the manner which I have already described but without sleeves. He must have a dirk § and two swords, one girded on and another hanging from the pommel of the saddle. On his head he must have a dependable helmet made of good steel and provided with a visor.|| He must also have a strong, thick shield fastened to a durable shoulder belt and, in addition, a good sharp spear with a firm shaft and pointed with fine steel. Now it seems needless to

* The mail hose were made of chain mail. *Aarbøger for nordisk Oldkyndighed*, 1867, 73-74.

† The kneepieces, or *genouillères* were pieces of armor worn to protect the knees.

‡ Blom thinks that the breastplate was a new thing in the thirteenth century (*ibid.*, 76), but Falk believes that it was used quite generally (*Altnordische Waffenkunde*, 182).

§ The dirk (*brynkniifr*) was probably a poniard-like weapon used to pierce the chain mail at the joints. Falk, *Altnordische Waffenkunde*, 124.

|| The helmet with the visor appears in the illustrations of the closing years of the twelfth century; the earlier helmet was a steel cap with a nose guard. *Aarbøger for nordisk Oldkyndighed*, 83-84.

speak further about the equipment of men who fight on horseback; there are, however, other weapons which a mounted warrior may use, if he wishes; among these are the "horn bow" * and the weaker crossbow, which a man can easily draw even when on horseback, and certain other weapons, too, if he should want them.

XXXIX

MILITARY ENGINES

Son. Inasmuch as you seem to think that you have described most of the weapons which are convenient to have in naval warfare or in fighting on horseback, I will now ask you to say something about those which you think are most effective in besieging or defending castles.

Father. All the weapons that we have just discussed as useful on ships or on horseback can also be used in attacking and defending castles; but there are many other kinds. If one is to attack a castle with the weapons which I have enumerated, he will also have need of trebuchets: † a few powerful ones with which to throw large rocks against stone walls to determine whether they are able to resist such violent blows, and weaker trebuchets for throwing missiles over the walls to demolish the houses within the castle. But if one is unable to break down or shatter a stone wall with trebuchets,

* Little seems to be known about the hornbow. Captain Blom finds it mentioned in the Latin sources as *balista cornea* or *balista cum cornu*. *Aarbøger for nordisk Oldkyndighed*, 1867, 100–101. Falk believes that it was a bow which was reinforced on the inner side with horn. *Altnordische Waffenkunde*, 91–92.

† The trebucket (French *trébuchet*) was a siege engine which came into use in the twelfth century; it was worked by counterpoises. For a description see Oman, *Art of War*, 143–144; *Aarbøger for nordisk Oldkyndighed*, 1867, 103–104; Falk, *Altnordische Waffenkunde*, 193–194.

he will have to try another engine, namely the iron-headed ram,* for very few stone walls can withstand its attack. If this engine fails to batter down or shake the wall, it may be advisable to set the cat † to work. A tower raised on wheels ‡ is useful in besieging castles, if it is constructed so that it rises above the wall which is to be stormed, even though the difference in height be only seven ells; but the higher it is, the more effective it will be in attacking another tower. Scaling ladders on wheels which may be moved backward and forward are also useful for this purpose, if they are boarded up underneath and have good ropes on both sides. And we may say briefly about this craft, that in besieging castles use will be found for all sorts of military engines. But whoever wishes to join in this must be sure that he knows precisely even to the very hour when he shall have need for each device.

Those who have to defend a castle may also make use of these weapons which I have now enumerated and many more: trebuchets both large and small, hand slings and staff slings. They will find crossbows and other bows, too, very effective, as well as every other

* The ram was a massive beam used to batter down walls; it was an inheritance from antiquity and was much in use. See Oman, *Art of War*, 132; *Aarbøger for nordisk Oldkyndighed*, 1867, 104; Falk, *Altnordische Waffenkunde*, 198.

† *Grafsvin*. Falk translates this with "badger" and seems to believe that it was a shelter on wheels under which the attackers might work in comparative safety. *Altnordische Waffenkunde*, 196. It is more likely, however, that a "cat" is meant. The cat was a long pointed pole used to loosen the stones in a wall and thus to make a breach. It is also called a "sow" and the Old Norse term *grafsvin*, "digging boar," was evidently an attempt to translate the Latin term *scrofa* or *sus*, "hog" or "sow." For a description of the cat, see Oman, *Art of War*, 132.

‡ On the subject of the movable tower see Oman, *Art of War*, 134-135, 549.

type of shooting weapons, such as spears and javelins both light and heavy. But to resist the trebuchets, the cat, and the engine called the ram, it is well to strengthen the entire stone wall on the inside with large oaken timbers; though if earth and clay are plentiful, these materials had better be used. Those who have to defend castles are also in the habit of making curtains of large oak boughs, three or even five deep, to cover the entire wall; * and the curtain should be thoroughly plastered with good sticky clay. To defeat the attacks of the ram, men have sometimes filled large bags with hay or straw and lowered them with light iron chains in front of the ram where it sought to pierce the wall. It sometimes happens that the shots fall so rapidly upon a fortress that the defenders are unable to remain at the battlements; it is then advisable to hang out brattices made of light planks and built high enough to reach two ells above the openings in the parapet and three ells below them. They should be wide enough to enable the men to fight with any sort of weapons between the parapet and the brattice wall, and they should be hung from slender beams in such a way that they may be readily drawn in and hung out again later, as one may wish.†

The “ hedgehog ” ‡ will be found an effective device

* These curtains were evidently placed on the outer side of the wall.

† This translation of *hengivigskarð* is based on Blom's interpretation (*Aarbøger for nordisk Oldkyndighed*, 1867, 105–106, note). The brattices were projecting galleries built along the top of the wall and were in use before it became customary to build stone parapets. Cf. Oman, *Art of War*, 534.

‡ The hedgehog (*ericius*) in common use was a form of the *cheval de frise* and was laid on the earth to impede a hostile advance. I know of no other mention of the device (*igulkottr*) described above.

in defending a castle. It is made of large, heavy beams armed along the ridge with a brush of pointed oak nails; it is hung outside the parapet to be dropped on anyone who comes too near the wall. Turnpikes made of large heavy logs armed with sharp teeth of hard oak may be raised on end near the battlements and kept ready to be dropped upon those who approach the castle. Another good device is the "briar," * which is made of good iron and has curved thorns as hard as steel with a barb on every thorn; and the chain, from which it hangs, as high up as a man can reach must be made of spiked links, so that it can be neither held nor hewn; higher up any kind of rope that seems suitable may be used, only, it must be firm and strong. This briar is thrown down among the enemy in the hope of catching one or more of them and then it is pulled up again. A "running wheel" † is also a good weapon for those who defend castles: it is made of two millstones with an axle of tough oak joining them. Planks sloping downward are laid out through the openings in the wall; the wheel is rolled out upon these and then down upon the enemy.

A "shot wagon" ‡ is also a good device. This is made like any other wagon with two or four wheels as one likes and is intended to carry a load of stones, hot or

* Captain Blom is disposed to look on the *brynklungr* as an imaginary device (*Aarbøger for nordisk Oldkyndighed*, 1867, 106) but Falk finds that some such instrument was in use in Italy as early as the tenth century (*Altnordische Waffenkunde*, 199-200).

† Devices somewhat similar to the "running wheel" seem to have been used in medieval warfare, but of this particular form no other mention has been found. See Falk, *Altnordische Waffenkunde*, 200.

‡ *Ibid.* The "shot wagon" is not mentioned elsewhere.

cold as one may prefer. It must also be provided with two firm and strong chains, one on each side, which can be depended on to check the wagon even where it has a long track to run upon. It is meant to run on planks set with a downward slope, but one must be careful to keep the wheels from skidding off the planks. When the chains check the speed, the wagon shoots its load out upon the men below. The more uneven the stones are, some large and some small, the more effective the load will be. Canny men, who are set to defend a wall and wish to throw rocks down upon the attacking line or upon the penthouse, make these rocks of clay with pebbles, slingstones, and other hard stones placed inside. The clay is burned hard enough on the outside to endure the flight while the load is being thrown; but as soon as the rocks fall they break into fragments and consequently cannot be hurled back again. To break down stone walls, however, large, hard rocks are required. Similarly, when one hurls missiles from a stone fortress against an opposing wooden tower or upon the axletrees which support siege engines, towers, scaling ladders, cats, or any other engine on wheels, the larger and harder the rocks that are used, the more effective they will be.

Boiling water, molten glass, and molten lead are also useful in defending walls.* But if a cat or any other covered engine which cannot be damaged by hot water is being pushed toward a castle, it is a good plan, if the engine is lower than the walls, to provide beams care-

* See the Sorö edition, 424-425, where the editor cites a number of references to the use of fire in defensive warfare; these are nearly all drawn from the sagas.

fully shod with iron underneath and in addition armed with large, sharp, red-hot plowshares. These are to be thrown down upon the wooden engine in which the plowshares are likely to stick fast, while the beams may be hoisted up again. This attack should be followed up with pitch, sulphur, or boiling tar.*

Mines dug in the neighborhood of a castle are also an excellent protection; the deeper and narrower they are, the better it is; and where men are shoving mounted engines toward the walls, it were well if there were many mines. All mines should have a number of small openings, which must be covered so as not to be visible on the surface. They should be filled with fuel of the most inflammable sort, peat or anything else that burns readily. When a castle is attacked at night either from wooden towers or with scaling ladders or any other engine on wheels, the defenders should steal out and fire the mines.†

Now if it should happen that the enemy's stones come over the battlements with such violence that the men cannot remain in the open to defend the wall, it is a good plan to set up strong posts cut from thick oak and to lay large and tough cross beams upon these, then to roof the whole over with firm oak timbers, and finally to cover the roofing with a layer of earth not less than three or four ells in depth, upon which the rocks may be allowed to drop.‡ In like manner the attack of

* Evidently the purpose would be to crush the engine with the beam, to set it on fire with the hot plowshares, and to put the assailants to flight with the pitch, sulphur, or tar; these would also feed the flames.

† On the subject of mines see Oman, *Art of War*, 549-550.

‡ The posts were apparently placed on top of the wall, the purpose being to raise the wall to a greater height as well as to furnish shelter for the defenders.

a wooden tower that is moving toward a castle may be foiled by setting up strong, firm posts rising considerably higher than the attacking tower. But a more effective contrivance than all the engines that I have now described is a stooping shield-giant which breathes forth flame and fire.* And now we shall close our account of the engines that are useful in defending castle walls with the reminder that every sort of weapon with which one can shoot, hurl, hew, or thrust, and every kind that can be used in attack or defense may be brought into service.

XL

THE PROPER MANNERS AND CUSTOMS OF A ROYAL COURT

Son. Since you seem to think that sufficient has been said about weapons both for attack and defense, how they should be made or built, and on what occasion each kind should be used (and after your comments these things are very clear to me), I now wish to ask whether there may not be other subjects which you think ought to be discussed, such as pertain to customs that one must observe in the presence of great men or at royal courts.

Father. There still remain a number of things which a man should not fail to hear discussed and to reflect upon, if he is to attend on kings or other magnates and

* The shield-giant was probably a mythical device; but it is possible as has been suggested that its fiery breath may refer to the use of Greek fire, with which the Norwegians became acquainted during the crusades, or even to early experiments with gunpowder. Falk, *Altnordische Waffenkunde*, 200-201. It is not known when gunpowder was invented, but the earliest known formula for making it is found in the writings of Roger Bacon, who was a contemporary of the author of the *King's Mirror*.

wishes to be ranked among them as a worthy man. But there are three things (which are, however, almost the same in reality) which one must observe with care: they are wisdom, good breeding, and courtesy. It is courtesy to be friendly, humble, ready to serve, and elegant in speech; to know how to behave properly while conversing or making merry with other men; to know precisely, when a man is conversing with women, whether they be young or older in years, of gentle or humble estate, how to select such expressions as are suited to their rank and are as proper for them to hear as for him to use. In like manner when one speaks with men, whether they be young or old, gentle or humble, it is well to know how to employ fitting words and how to determine what expressions are proper for each one to take note of. Even when mere pleasantry is intended, it is well to choose fair and decent words. It is also courtesy to know how to discriminate in language, when to use plural and when to use singular forms in addressing the men with whom one is conversing; to know how to select one's clothes both as to color and other considerations; and to know when to stand or sit, when to rise or kneel. It is also courtesy to know when a man ought to let his hands drop gently and to keep them quiet, or when he ought to move them about in service for himself or for others; to know in what direction to turn his face and breast, and how to turn his back and shoulders. It is courtesy to know precisely when he is free to wear his cloak, hat, or coif, if he has one, and when these are not to be worn; also to know, when at the table, whether good breeding demands that one must watch the great men partake of

food, or whether one may eat and drink freely in any way that seems convenient and proper. It is also courtesy to refrain from sneers and contemptuous jests, to know clearly what churlishness is and to avoid it carefully.

It is good breeding to be agreeable and never obstinate when one is with other men, and to be modest in demeanor; to walk a proper gait when on foot and to watch one's limbs carefully wherever one goes to make sure that each will move correctly and yet in a natural way. It is good breeding, too, when one strolls about in a city among strangers, to keep silence and use few words, to shun turmoil and disgraceful tippling, to punish theft and robbery and all other foolish rioting. It is also good breeding to avoid profanity, cursing, scolding, and all other pernicious talk. Be careful also never to appear as the advocate of stupid and dishonest men and especially not to support them in their impudence, but rather to show hatred for wickedness in every form. It is good breeding to shun chess and dice, brothels and perjury, false testimony, and other lasciviousness or filthy behavior. It shows good breeding to be cleanly in food and clothes; to take good care of the ships, horses, weapons, and buildings that one may possess; to be cautious and never rash and to be undismayed in times of stress; never to be ostentatious, domineering, or envious; and to shun arrogance and affectation in every form. But the chief point in all conduct is to love God and holy church, to hear mass regularly, to be diligent in divine service, and to implore mercy for oneself and all other Christian people.

No one can attain to all these virtues which we have now enumerated as belonging to courtesy and good breeding, unless he is also endowed with wisdom. These gifts will accompany wisdom: elegance in speech, eloquence, insight into proper conduct, and ability to discriminate between good manners and what passes for such in the sayings of foolish men, though they are in fact bad manners. It is also wisdom, when one is present at the law court, or some other place where men congregate, and hears the speeches and the suits of men, to be able to discern clearly what suits or what speeches delivered there are based on reason and which ones are merely glib palaver and senseless verbosity. It is also wisdom to have a clear appreciation, when decrees are rendered in the disputes of men, of how these are stated, so that not a word will be added or taken away, if one should need to know them at some later time. It is also wisdom to keep faithfully in mind what facts were discussed and what agreements were reached. It is wisdom to know the law thoroughly, to have clear perceptions of what is actual law and what is merely called law, being nothing but quibble and subterfuge. It is also wisdom, if one has a request to make, to be able to determine what he may ask for that will prove serviceable and is proper for the other to grant; also, if one meets a request, to know precisely what he may grant with propriety and in what matters he must be careful not to bind himself or those who come after him, such things, namely, as may prove a disgrace to him rather than a distinction. Finally, it is wisdom not to be strait-handed

about things which one may just as well dispose of, lest such stint or stinginess bring shame upon him.

There is also great wisdom in moderation and righteousness. All forms of learning, insight, and good foresight which is necessary to courtesy and good breeding, to stewardship, government and the enforcement of law, — these, too, are akin to wisdom. And you will need to learn all this thoroughly, if you wish to be known among kings and chieftains as an estimable man, for all who know these things are received with favor among the great. Furthermore, the lives of men who have mastered this knowledge may bring great honor to themselves and profit to many others. But wisdom has many forms, for it springs from roots which have many branches. And from these roots of wisdom rises the mightiest of all stems, which again divides into large boughs, many branches, and a multitude of twigs of different sizes, some small and some large. These are later distributed among men in such a way that some obtain the larger and some the smaller ones, and these riches have their value according as they are loved. He who is sure to appreciate this wealth and share it freely receives a large amount; for the nature of this possession is such that it is most attracted to him who loves it most and uses it most liberally. And if men knew how to value and appreciate these riches properly, gold and silver would seem to them like rust, clay, or ashes, when compared with these treasures. But he who wishes to secure this wealth must begin in this way: he must fear Almighty God and love Him above all things.

XLI

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED

Son. It was clearly well-advised to continue this inquiry, for now I have gotten both useful and precise information; and this speech will surely help every man who is at least somewhat intelligent to more definite ideas than he had before. Moreover, those who have received only slender wands from the boughs of wisdom are more numerous than those who have received large branches, some getting but the tiniest twigs, and some a mere leaf, while those who get nothing must indeed be few. Therefore I wish to ask you to instruct me further in the art of choosing and laying hold on those branches which may prove useful to myself and others.

Father. The virtues that I have just enumerated grow especially on the boughs of wisdom, but they ramify into a great many good branches and twigs. Now these are the branches which are most useful: a rational outlook, a temperate mind, and the capacity to determine judiciously what one owes to every other man. If you are angry with any man because of a law suit or some evil deed, take careful thought before seeking revenge, as to how important the matter really is and how great a retribution it is worth. When you hear things in the speech of other men which offend you much, be sure to investigate with reasonable care whether the tales be true or false; but if they prove to be true and it is proper for you to seek revenge, take it with reason and moderation and never when heated or irritated. Even though you hear tidings which seem damaging to yourself or

your business, such as loss of property or men, always bear it with a calm and undaunted temper. Let the loss of wealth seem least to you, for you must bear in mind that it is sinful to worship wealth or to love it too highly, even though it returns a man's love and comes abundantly into his keeping. And to love wealth much, when it seems inclined to turn away from a man and does not return his love, is surely sinful and will lead to grief. Remember, too, that all come destitute into the world; and our mode of departure from this life is such that wealth cannot follow us out of the world. Nevertheless, you must take heed that nothing is lost through your neglect or indifference. And never grieve so deeply over a loss that you cannot be hopeful and cheerful as before.

If you suffer loss of men, bear that loss, too, with a calm spirit; for remember that every man in departing this life fulfils a law in human nature, inasmuch as no one is created to live forever in this world. Let it grieve you more, if an acquaintance of yours who has not lived as he ought here on earth, should die in that state and leave the world in disgrace; but most of all if you fear that his soul is in peril; for such things are rather to be lamented than that in dying he pays a debt to nature. But if he lived uprightly while on earth and made proper provision for his soul before he died, then you may take comfort in the good repute that lives after him, and even more in the blissful happiness which you believe he will enjoy with God in the other world. In the same way you must keep your spirit calm and in good control when such events come to pass as may seem profitable to you and stir your heart to joy and gladness,

whether it be the death of men whom you have hated, or other happenings in which you might seem to find pleasure. But if you should happen to hear of the death of a man whom you counted an enemy and to whom you had planned to do evil, if opportunity should be found, rejoice much more in that God has saved you from a threefold sin than in the death of him who has departed. For you should be glad that God has prevented your hands from committing the sinful deed that was in your purpose, and has relieved your mind of the long-continued wrath and bitterness which you cherished against your enemy while he lived.

Likewise, if high honors and dignities should come to you from a king or from other magnates, it is important that you should know how to receive them with modesty, lest what befalls so many an indiscreet man should also happen to you. For it is often the case that when one who is lacking in good sense receives any preferment from great men, he will rate himself so high in his pride and avarice that he counts no other man his equal. But such pretension leads to the downfall of everyone who behaves in this way; inasmuch as it is God's purpose to strike down immoderate pride with sacred humility; and everyone who is too proud and greedy in his behavior will surely find God a constant opponent. Now if you should be so fortunate as to receive preferments from a king or other princes, remember it is God's method and purpose, by prompting them (for He holds the minds and hearts of chiefs in His hand), to elevate such men as He wishes to honor and dignity. On the other hand, it is also the duty of every man to

assist all those who have less strength than he. Keep in mind, then, if God should raise you up to any place of honor, that it must be to the profit of all who are less capable than yourself, except such as hate morality and right counsel; to them it should be a hindrance for a just man to be given power and authority. If God gives you wisdom and clear insight and you have also the good fortune to be awarded honors by great men, there are certain vices which you need especially to guard against: arrogant self-esteem, avarice that yearns for bribes, and forgetful neglect of the needs of men who are less capable than yourself. Keep constantly before your eyes as a warning the misfortunes of those who have fallen into disgrace because of immoderate pride. Also keep in mind, as a comforting hope, the careers of men who have received constant honors because of their steadfast justice and humility.

XLII

A DISCUSSION OF HOW GOD REWARDS RIGHTEOUSNESS,
HUMILITY, AND FIDELITY, ILLUSTRATED BY EXAMPLES
DRAWN FROM SACRED AND PROFANE HISTORY

Son. I see clearly that God creates men unequal in power and wisdom because He wishes to see how each one is going to use what He has endowed him with, whether in high living for the glorification of self, or in bountiful kindness toward those who have need of him and have not received such gifts from God. And now I want to ask you to cite a few examples both of men whose good sense and humility have brought them honor and of such as have suffered destruction through vain pride.

Father. There have been so many cases of that sort, that we should have to extend our talk to a great length, if we were to mention all those of either class which we know could serve as examples to show how these things have worked out. I shall therefore name a few only, though some of each kind, for in that way a long discourse may be the sooner finished. The following instances are ancient and easily remembered. When Joseph was sold into Egypt,* a mighty lord bought him; but after he had purchased him he found that Joseph was a discreet man, and he preferred and honored him above all his other servants, not only above those whom he kept in bondage, but even above his freeborn kinsmen; and he gave into his hands the oversight of his wealth and property, house and home, and all his welfare. But because Joseph was a handsome man, kind and courteous in behavior, and sensible in speech, he won the love and friendship of all who knew him and were subject to the same lord who was Joseph's master.

The wife of this mighty man loved Joseph more than was proper, and impelled by evil desire, she sought to commit a vile sin against her husband, because of the love that she bore for Joseph; and she was not ashamed in her bold passion to intimate to him what she had in mind. But when he learned her purpose, he replied in this wise: "We cannot deal with each other as equals, for you are my lady and I am your thrall; and it would be a very great disgrace for you to submit yourself to me and too bold and rash in me to bring such dishonor

* *Genesis*, cc. xxxix-xli. The author treats the Biblical narratives with great freedom.

upon you. But even worse is the unfaithfulness toward my lord which I should be guilty of, if I were to reward his kindness in this way like a treacherous thrall. For he has trusted me, his servant, so far as to give all his wealth and riches into my hands and keeping, and I must not deceive my lawful master with shameful treachery, unless I should wish to prove the saying in daily use that it is ill to have a thrall as a chosen friend." But when the woman saw that Joseph was a good man and wished to be faithful, she thought it a shame that he should know her faithlessness, and, prompted by enmity and not by justice, she became anxious to work his ruin, if possible. So she told her husband that Joseph had made an unseemly request and added that it showed great audacity in a thrall to make such bold remarks to his lady. She was believed as a good wife, and Joseph was cast into prison strongly fettered and heavily chained, the purpose being to let him end his days by rotting alive because of his pride and faithlessness. But when God, Who always loves justice and humility, saw the faithfulness of Joseph whom He knew to be innocent, He shaped the outcome so that Joseph profited by the condemnation that he had suffered though innocent. For God saved him from prison under such circumstances that he was elevated to far greater prominence than before; and God prompted King Pharaoh to make Joseph master and judge of all Egypt next to the king himself; and this office he held into his old age and as long as he lived.

Long after this and in another place, a somewhat similar experience came to a famous king, who ruled

over many realms. He was called by three names, because the languages differed in the lands that he ruled over: in one place he was called Artaxerxes; in another place, Cyrus; and some tell us that to him God spoke these kind words by the mouth of his prophet: "To mine anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings," etc.* Others, however, maintain that it was another Cyrus who is referred to in this scripture; but we shall not discuss this any longer, since we cannot be sure whether it was written about this Cyrus or another. But in a third place the king was called Ahasuerus. And whereas he himself was mighty and excellent, he also had a wealthy wife named Vashti, who was his queen. Once when the king was absent in distant warfare to extend his dominion, he had appointed Queen Vashti to govern that part of his kingdom where his court resided. On his return home with a wealth of spoils, he made a great feast to gladden all those among his lords who had accompanied him on the campaign; and Queen Vashti made another feast for her own lords, who had remained at home to assist her in the government. Then the king commanded Vashti to appear before him in his hall in all her regalia and arrayed in all the beauty of queenly raiment and thus to show her joy in his home-coming and do honor to his feast. But Queen Vashti refused to obey the king's command, saying that she could not leave her own feast, having invited many good chiefs. When the king saw

* *Isaiah*, xlv, 1. In this case the author quotes directly from the *Vulgate*: "Christo meo Sciro, cujus apprehendi dexteram, ut subjiciam ante faciem ejus gentes et dorsa regum vertam."

her arrogance and pride, he concluded that she esteemed him no more highly for the perilous toil that he had endured while extending his frontiers than she esteemed herself for having remained quietly at home with the regency, which he had left in her hands. Because of this presumption the king became so wrathful, that he decreed that Vashti had forfeited the office of queen and all the authority which she possessed. And he found a captive maiden of the people of Israel, whose name was Esther, who was then in bondage in his kingdom, though she had sprung from a prominent family in her native land, and this maiden the king placed in Vashti's seat, endowing her with all the power that Vashti had once possessed; and he made Esther queen of all his kingdom.

A few days later another event occurred at this same court. There was a famous and powerful chief named Haman and he was with King Ahasuerus. So highly did the king esteem Haman that all the people were ordered to obey him and bow down before him as before the king himself. Now there was also a man named Mordecai, a captive of the people of Israel, who was Queen Esther's uncle; but inasmuch as he was both poor and in bondage, he dared not make known his kinship to the queen; nor dared the queen show greater deference to him than to any other in the royal service. Then it happened one day, when Haman the prince came to see the king, that on his return home his way passed near where Mordecai sat. But Mordecai was brooding over the bondage in which he had been placed along with the people who had been taken captive out of Israel; and being in deep thought he failed to notice that Ha-

man was passing so near, and consequently did not rise to bow before him. But when Haman saw that an alien thrall neglected to bow the knee before him, he became so wrathful that as soon as he came home he ordered a high gallows to be raised near his house, on which he intended to hang Mordecai. He also caused letters to be sent throughout the realm permitting every man to deal with the people of Israel as he liked: whoever wished to do so might plunder them, or force them into bondage and servitude, or even slay them.

When the news of this came to Mordecai, necessity compelled him to deal more boldly with the queen than before: he came to wait upon her, and, throwing himself at her feet, he told these tidings with much sorrow. When the queen heard that the entire nation from which she had sprung was condemned, she called upon God with all her soul; next she sought the king's presence, robed in the stately apparel of a queen, and fell humbly at his feet. But when the queen had entered and the king saw that she came in such deep humility and with troubled countenance, he perceived that she had a matter of such great importance to bring before him that she would have to find the courage in his favor to state what concerned her. Taking her hand he raised her up, spoke gently to her, seated her beside him, and bade her state clearly all the details of her errand. Queen Esther did as the king commanded and related the whole event just as it had occurred; and then she begged him to take action according to royal mercy rather than according to Haman's excessive anger. When the king saw Haman's boundless ambition and arrogant wrath,

he caused Haman himself to be hanged upon the gallows which he had intended for Mordecai, and sent orders throughout the entire realm that the people of Israel be allowed to live in complete freedom according to the ordinances of their sacred laws; and he gave to Mordecai all the authority that Haman had once possessed.*

From this you will observe that God demands moderation and fairness, humility, justice, and fidelity as a duty from those whom he raises to honor. For Joseph, as we said before, was rewarded with splendid honors and great advancement because of his faithfulness and humility, although he had been sold for money like a thrall into a strange land; but God soon raised him by the king's command to be a lord and the highest judge in all Egypt next to the king himself. One may also observe from this how much it is contrary to God's will to exalt oneself through vain conceit; for Queen Vashti lost her queenship and all her power in a single day because of her pride, while a captive maiden of a strange people was appointed in her stead; and Haman lost all his authority in a single day because of his excessive vanity, while his dignities were given to a stranger, a captive thrall. Now if you should win honors from great lords, beware of an outcome like those in the stories which you have just heard, and there are many such; but make good use of the story that I told you earlier about Joseph.

There are still other examples which go far back into the days of Emperor Constantine: for God had ap-

* See *Esther*, cc. i-viii.

pointed him ruler of all the world, and he turned to righteousness and Christianity as soon as he came to understand the holy faith. He gave his mother, Queen Helena, a kingdom east of the sea in the land of the Jews. But because her realm and dominion were there, she came to be persuaded that no faith concerning God could be correct but that held by the Jews; and as letters passed between them, the queen and her son the emperor, they began to realize that they differed somewhat in the beliefs which each of them held concerning God. Then the emperor commanded the queen to come over the sea from the east with her wise and learned men and many other lords to a meeting in Rome, where the verities of the holy faith should be examined. But when the queen arrived with her company, the emperor had called together many bishops including Pope Sylvester and many wise men, both Christians and heathen. When the conference had begun and a court had been appointed to decide between the emperor and the queen, it became evident to both that there was likely to be a violent dispute between the Christian bishops and the learned Jews and other wise men who had come with the queen from the east, in view of the fact that each side would produce weighty arguments from its books against the other to prove and confirm its own learning and holy faith. They saw clearly, therefore, that it would be necessary for the assembly to appoint upright judges, who could weigh in a tolerant and rational spirit all the arguments that might be offered on either side.

But whereas the emperor with the pope and the Christian bishops was the defender of holy Christianity and

the queen the protecting shield of the Jewish faith, it was clear to both that it would be improper for them to subject themselves to temptation by acting as judges in this dispute. So they ordered a careful search to be made among the wise men to find whether there might be some in all their number who were so reliable in wisdom, judgment, and rightmindedness, that all those present could trust them to judge rightly in their contest. But when the entire multitude had been examined, only two men were found whom the people dared choose to be judges in these important matters; and both of these men were heathen and bound neither to the law of the Christians nor to the Jewish faith. One of them was named Craton: he was a great philosopher and thoroughly versed in all learning; he was a friend of mighty men and enjoyed their favor; but never had he cared for more of this world's riches than what he needed for clothes and food. And when great men sometimes gave him more than he required, he would give away what he did not consume to such as were needy. It was also in his nature to speak little but truthfully, and no man knew that falsehood had ever been found on his lips; wherefore all felt that the merits of wisdom and good character which he possessed would surely make him worthy to judge in these important matters. The other who was chosen judge was named Zenophilus; he was a famous and powerful prince, and where he directed the government it was not known that he had ever swerved from justice. He was a great master of eloquence and learned in all science, friendly in speech and affable, though a man of authority. Nor could any-

one recall that falsehood had ever been found on his lips. These having been chosen to act as judges in behalf of all present, the Christians and the Jews held a court; and these two decided all the disputes, as they were chosen to do, and it was found as before that in no wise did they deviate from justice.*

I have cited these instances that you might appreciate the humility and rightmindedness of both the emperor and the queen; for though they were lords of the entire world, they regarded it as proper to sit in obedience to chosen judges who were much inferior to themselves in both power and wealth and every other respect. Likewise you are to appreciate what great honor these men gained through their wisdom and uprightness; for though they were both heathen, they were superior to all others as to insight into the holy faith and the world's welfare. And now you will appreciate what I told you earlier in our conversation, namely, that much depends on the example that a man leaves after him. Joseph lived before the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ; he was sold for money into Egypt as an alien thrall; but his faithfulness and humility pleased God so highly that he was made ruler next to the king of all those who were native to the land and had wealth and kinsmen there, whether they were rich or poor. It is many hundred winters since Joseph died, but his glory still lives and is daily recalled among all thoughtful people throughout the world. Queen Vashti died

* The author's source for his account of the council where Craton and Zenophilus served as judges is the legend of Pope Silvester, probably the Old Norse version of the legend, *Silvesters Saga*, published by Unger in *Heilagra Manna Sögur*, II, 245-286.

long before the birth of Christ, as did Haman the prince; but the disgrace that came upon them because of their pride and folly still lives. Queen Esther bears even to this day the living honor which she gained through her humility; though she was brought to India * as a captive bondmaiden, she was later made queen over many large kingdoms and seated upon the throne from which Queen Vashti was banished.

Although the events that we last related in speaking of Emperor Constantine and his mother Queen Helena happened after the birth of Christ, it was still so long ago that no man can recall them because of their antiquity; yet they are bright with honor even to this day. Craton and Zenophilus, though they are dead, are celebrated for their wisdom and righteousness. Though both were heathen men, they were chosen to be judges over nearly all the people who were in the world, and were even trusted in behalf of all men, both Christians and Jews, to pass judgment on those laws which neither of them kept, but upon which the welfare of the world nevertheless depended. From such occurrences you will realize that God holds in His hand the tiller with which He turns and moves the hearts of great lords whenever He wishes, and controls all their thoughts according to His will. For King Pharaoh raised up Joseph to a dominion above that of all the other princes who were in the kingdom before him. Ahasuerus deprived Vashti of her queenship, though she was both wealthy and high-born, and appointed Esther queen in her stead. He also

* Not India but Persia in the Biblical story; but the Northmen in the middle ages used the term India very much as we use the term Orient today.

hanged Haman, the renowned prince, and gave all his power to Mordecai, who was once a bondman brought captive from a strange land. Emperor Constantine placed Craton and Zenophilus, two heathen men, in the judgment seat and trusted them to pass judgment on the verities and the interpretation of the holy faith. Now you shall know of a truth that all these events have come to pass through God's providence and secret commands; and all these things are noted down for the memory of men in the future, so that all may learn and derive profit from the good examples, but shun the evil ones. And if it should be your fortune to become a king's-man, remember these examples that I have now shown you (and there are a great many others like them which we have not mentioned in this speech); and be sure to follow all those which you see are likely to profit you.

XLIII

THE DUTIES AND THE EXALTED POSITION OF THE KING

Son. God reward you, sire, for taking so much time to hear all my questions and for giving such very patient and useful answers: for these talks will surely lead me to think and observe more accurately than I did before. It may also be that others will study these learned discourses in the future and derive knowledge, good insight, and profitable manners from them. There are, however, several other things which I have in mind to investigate and wish very much to ask about. And therefore I beg you not yet to grow weary of teaching me; for your permission gives me courage to confide so fully

in you that I am not likely to overlook anything that my mind is eager to know. Indeed, it seems to me that this subject opens up such a wide field, that there must be many things left which one needs to know and discern fully, if one wishes to be rated a worthy man by kings or other great lords; and I am eager to hear you talk further about these matters.

But for this once I wish to inquire about men of greater importance than those who have to serve the mighty. I see clearly that those who serve are in duty bound to strive after the best manners, knowledge, wisdom, and righteousness; but it would seem that those, who are chiefs and rulers and whom all others must serve, owe an even greater duty to seek both knowledge and insight; above all it must be their duty to love every form of righteousness, since they have authority to punish all others who are not righteous. Therefore I wish to ask with your permission what customs the king himself should observe which would accord with his regal dignity. Tell me clearly so that I can understand what business or conduct is demanded of him early in the morning and what affairs he is later occupied with throughout the day; for he is so highly honored and exalted upon earth that all must bend and bow before him as before God. So great is his power that he may dispose as he likes of the lives of all who live in his kingdom: he lets him live whom he wills and causes him to be slain whom he wills. But I have observed this, that if a man becomes another's banesman, all upright men from that time on have an aversion for him as for a heathen; since to slay a man is counted a great sin for

which the one who commits it must suffer great penance and much trouble before Christian people will again admit him to fellowship. And again, you told me in an earlier speech to shun manslaughter; but you added that all manslaughter committed by royal command or in battle I need shun no more than any other deed which is counted good. Now if the king has received such great authority from God that all slaughter done by his command is without guilt, I should imagine that he must need to be very wise, cautious, and upright in all his doings; and therefore I wish to have you explain fully the things that I have now asked about, unless you feel that my questions are stupid, or that I am presuming too much in showing curiosity about the doings of such great men.

Father. Your questions are not stupid, for we may just as well talk about how the king has to order his government or his conduct as about other men. It surely is his bounden duty to seek knowledge and understanding, and he ought indeed to be well informed as to what has occurred in the past, for in that way he will gain insight for all the business that pertains to his kingship. You have stated that he is highly honored and exalted on earth and that all bow before him as before God; and the reason for this is that the king represents divine lordship: for he bears God's own name and sits upon the highest judgment seat upon earth, wherefore it should be regarded as giving honor to God Himself, when one honors the king, because of the name which he has from God. The son of God himself, when he was on earth, taught by his own example that all should

honor the king and show him due obedience; for he commanded his apostle Peter to draw fishes up from the depth of the sea and to open the mouth of the fish that he caught first, and said that he would find a penny there, which he ordered him to pay to Caesar as tribute money for them both. From this you are to conclude that it is the duty of every one upon earth to respect and honor the royal title which an earthly man holds from God; for the very son of God thought it proper to honor the royal dignity so highly that he, to the glory of kingship, made himself subject to tribute along with that one of his disciples whom he made chief of all his apostles and gave all priestly honors.

XLIV

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED

Son. There remains one thing, which, as usual, I shall need to have explained further, as it is not very clear to me. You stated, and it seems reasonable, that the king holds a title of high honor and dignity from God Himself; but I do not see clearly why God made Himself subject to the tribute of an earthly king; since He must, it seems to me, be above all kings, seeing that He rules the earthly as well as the heavenly kingdom.

Father. That God Himself has honored earthly kings you will observe from the fact that, when He came down to earth from the loftiest pinnacles of heaven, He regarded Himself as having come among men as a guest and did not wish to claim a share in the earthly kingship, though he might have done so. But He fulfilled the

words that David had spoken: "The Lord ruleth in the heavens, but verily he hath given an earthly kingdom to the sons of men." * Now God, while He was on earth, wished to honor earthly kings and kingdoms rather than disparage them in any way; for He would not deprive the earthly kingship of what He had formerly given into the control of earthly lords; but God showed a perfect obedience to Caesar. You should also observe that, just as God commanded His apostle Peter to examine the first fish that he drew and take a penny from its mouth (and God did not want him to examine the second fish or the third, but the first only), similarly every man should in all things first honor the king and the royal dignity. For God Himself calls the king His anointed, and every king who possesses the full honors of royalty is rightly called the Lord's anointed. In like manner one of God's apostles said in a sermon while instructing the people in the true faith: "Fear God and honor your king," † — which is almost as if he had literally said that he who does not show perfect honor to the king does not fear God.

Every king, as you have said, ought, indeed, to be wise, well-informed, and above everything upright, that he may be able to realize fully that he is after all merely a servant of God, though he is honored and exalted so highly in the supreme service of God, that all bow down

* The reference is evidently to *Psalms*, cxv, 16: "The heavens, even the heavens, are the Lord's: but the earth hath he given to the children of men" (King James' version). The *Vulgate* reads (cxiii, 16), "Caelum caeli Domino; terram autem dedit filiis hominum." In neither case is the idea of an earthly kingship implied. It is evident that the author is quoting and translating from memory.

† *I Peter*, ii, 17.

before him as before God; for in so doing they worship God and the holy name which the king bears but not the king himself. It is, therefore, in the very nature of kingship to inspire all with a great awe and fear of the king, wherefore every one trembles who hears him named. But he ought also to appear gracious and friendly toward all good men, lest any one should fear him so much as to be deterred from presenting any important request to him because of his severity.

In the night, as soon as the king is sated with sleep, it should be his duty and business to center his thoughts upon the kingdom as a whole and to consider how his plans may be formed and carried out in such a way that God will be well pleased with the care that he gives to the realm; also how it may be made most profitable and obedient to himself; further what measure of firmness he must use in restraining the rich lest they become too arrogant toward the poor, and what caution in uplifting the poor, lest they grow too defiant toward the wealthy; wherefore he needs to ponder and plan judiciously how to hold everyone to moderation in the estate in which he is placed. This, too, the king must be sure to keep in his thoughts, that when it becomes necessary to chastise those who are not satisfied with what God has planned for them, he must not be so lenient in his punishment, that this excessive indulgence should lead anyone to consider it safe to transgress what ought to stand as rightfully ordained. Nor must he be so severe in his penalties that God and rightminded men will regard him as punishing more from a cruel disposition than from a sense of justice. These things and many more a

king ought to reflect upon at night when he is done with sleep, for then fewer matters will come upon him unawares during the day, when the needs of the land are presented to him.

XLV

CONCERNING THE MODERATION WHICH A KING MUST OBSERVE IN HIS JUDICIAL SENTENCES AND PENALTIES, WITH ILLUSTRATIONS DRAWN FROM THE STORY OF GOD'S JUDGMENT IN THE CASE OF ADAM AND EVE, IN WHICH CASE TRUTH AND JUSTICE WERE ASSOCIATED WITH PEACE AND MERCY

Son. It is evident that a king must possess great constraint and an even greater sense of justice, as you remarked earlier, if he is to find the true mean in meting out punishment so as to be neither too lenient nor too severe. And now I wish to ask whether there are any examples which may guide him toward this moderation, inasmuch as you have stated that every king should have knowledge of all the examples that are to be found.

Father. I repeat what I said then that no man needs to be more learned or better informed in all subjects than a king, for both he and his subjects have great need of this. But one who has a thorough knowledge of past events will meet but few contingencies that are really unexampled. Now the following examples are very ancient, and every king should keep them frequently before his eyes and seek guidance from them for the government of his kingdom.

When God had created the entire world and had beautified it with grass and other herbage, as well as with birds and beasts, He appointed two human beings,

a man and a woman, to have dominion over everything. He led the two, Adam and Eve, to the highest point of Paradise and showed them all the birds and beasts and all the flowers and glories of Paradise. Then God said to Adam and Eve: "All these things that you now see I give to you for your maintenance and dominion, if you will keep the covenant which I now establish between ourselves. But these are the laws which you must carefully observe, if you wish to keep the gifts which I have now given you: that beautiful tree which you see standing with lovely apples in the midst of Paradise is called the tree of knowledge, and the fruit which the tree bears is called the apples of knowledge. This tree you must not touch nor may you eat of the apples which it bears, for as soon as you eat of them you shall die; but of everything else that you now see you may freely eat according to desire." Four sisters were called to witness this covenant, divine virgins, who should hear the laws decreed and learn all the terms of the agreement: the first was named Truth, the second, Peace, the third, Justice, and the fourth, Mercy. And God spoke thus to these virgins: "I command you to see to it that Adam does not break this covenant which has been made between Me and him: follow him carefully and protect him as long as he observes these things that are now decreed; but if he transgresses, you shall sit in judgment with your Father, for you are the daughters of the very Judge."

When the speech was ended, God vanished from Adam's sight; and Adam went forth to view the glories of Paradise. But at that time the serpent, which was

more subtle and crafty than any other beast, came in the guise of a maiden * to Eve, Adam's wife, and addressed her in great friendliness: "Blessed is your husband and you with him, since God has given all things into your power; for it is now the duty of every beast to obey your commands, seeing that Adam is our lord and you are our lady. But now I want to ask you whether God has withheld anything upon earth from your dominion, or whether you may enjoy all things as you wish without hesitation." Eve replied: "God has given us dominion over all things that he has created upon earth except the tree that stands in the midst of Paradise; of this He has forbidden us to eat, having said that we shall die, if we eat thereof." The serpent said to Eve: "Oho, my lady! He does not wish you to become so wise that you know both good and evil; for He knows the difference between good and evil things, while you know good things only. But when you have eaten of the apples of knowledge, you will become like God and will have knowledge of evil things as well as of good." As soon as the serpent had disappeared from Eve's sight, she called Adam her husband and told him all this speech. Then she took two of the apples of knowledge, ate one herself, and gave the other to Adam. But when they had eaten these apples, their knowledge was extended to evil things, as the serpent had said; and they

* The compiler of *Stjórn*, an Old Norse paraphrase of the larger part of the Old Testament, following Petrus Comestor's *Historia Scholastica*, attributes to Bede the statement that the serpent in those days bore the face of a maiden (p. 34). The author of the *King's Mirror* cannot have used *Stjórn*, as it seems to be a production of the fourteenth century, nor is there any evidence that he knew the *Historia Scholastica*.

began to observe the shapes of beasts and birds and trees, and finally how they themselves were formed. Then said Adam: "We are shamefully naked, we two, for there is nothing to hide our limbs; beasts are covered with hair and tail, birds with feathers, and trees with branches and leaves; we two alone have shamefully naked limbs." Thereupon they took broad leaves from the trees and covered those of their members which they were most ashamed to have naked. Then Peace came forth and spoke to Adam and Eve: "Now you have broken the law and your covenant with God, and I will no longer give you the security in the open fields that you have thus far enjoyed; but I will keep you safe in a secret hiding place until judgment is pronounced in your case; and I give you this safety that you may have opportunity to present your defense. But you must take good care to make a plea which may profit you, and prove a defense rather than a detriment." Truth came forth and spoke to Adam: "Take heed, when you come to plead your case, that you do not lie, for then I shall testify with you; tell everything just as it happened, for if you lie about anything, I shall testify against you at once." Justice came forth and said: "It is my duty and office to make sure that you are not unjustly condemned; but the more you are found guilty of lies and wrongdoing, the more shall I oppose you." Mercy came forth and said to Adam: "I shall add assistance and mercy to your plea, if you heed carefully all that my sisters have taught." But fear had come upon Adam and he went away to hide among the trees, lest he should be seen naked.

At midday God went forth to view the beauties of Paradise and Adam's stewardship; but as He did not see Adam in the wide fields, He called him, asking where he was. Adam replied: "I hid myself, Lord, because I was ashamed to show myself naked before Thy face." God answered, saying: "Why shouldst thou be more ashamed of thy nakedness now than at our former meeting, unless it be that thou hast broken the law and hast eaten of the apples of knowledge, which I forbade thee to eat." Adam replied as if defending himself: "The woman that Thou gavest me led me into this fault; if I had been alone about my affairs and if Thou hadst not given me this wife to advise with me, I should have kept the appointed law and should not have transgressed Thy command." Then God said to Eve: "Why didst thou give thy husband this evil counsel to break the law?" Eve replied as if defending her case: "The crafty serpent gave me that evil advice; had he not been created or appeared before me, I should not have come upon this evil design." Then God said: "Since the law has now been broken, I want those virgins whom I appointed keepers of our covenant to sit in judgment with us. Then Truth spoke: "It is my duty and business to show Adam's guilt, inasmuch as he has concealed with a lie what most of all led him to transgress. For this was the chief motive in your case, that the apples were fair and pleasant and sweet to taste, and that you desired greatly to be wiser than was promised you. You committed a theft in planning to take them secretly, covetous robbery in taking them without permission, and an act of insolent pride in wishing to become like unto

God in wisdom beyond what was promised you.” Then God said to Peace that she should give a brief opinion in the case. Peace answered in this wise: “Whereas Thou didst appoint me to watch over Adam’s safety as long as there was no transgression, I now offer to bring him an even greater insecurity, because he did not know how to keep the great freedom which he enjoyed before.” Then God said to Justice that she should give judgment; and she answered in this wise: “Since Adam was unable to keep the freedom that Peace had secured for him, let him now suffer misery and distress instead; and because he coveted knowledge of evil things, let him experience evil in place of good; and because he wished to make himself like God in knowledge beyond what was permitted, and blamed God for his transgression with lying excuses, let him suffer the death of which he was warned before he transgressed.” Then God said to Mercy that she should pass judgment on this transgression. Mercy replied in these words: “As it is my nature to urge forbearance and clemency to some degree in every case, I request that Adam be not destroyed through a merciless death; but since he now must repent of his error as long as he lives, let him have hope of mercy and help in his death, as long as he does not despair.”

Then it was discussed whether, in case he had sons, they should suffer for his sin, or be allowed to enjoy the gifts and the riches that God had given him at the beginning, but from which he had been ousted like an outlaw. Justice said: “How can his sons, who will be begotten in exile, enjoy those gifts that he forfeited as

an outlaw because of transgression ? Let his sons follow him to the death. But whereas he shall have hope of mercy and leniency and of a return to the possessions which he has now forfeited, let his sons be recalled with him through a new covenant." And when sentence had been passed in Adam's case, the sisters all came to a friendly agreement; Mercy and Truth embraced while Justice and Peace kissed each other with loving gestures.*

Now every king ought to have these two things frequently in mind: how God appeased His anger toward the man and the woman for breaking the law, and what judges He called in, lest His punishment should be too

* The story of the court proceedings in Paradise after the fall of man and the discussion between Mercy and Peace on the one side and Truth and Justice on the other was widely current in the thirteenth century. It made an important scene in certain types of mystery plays, and it seems quite likely that the source of the version given in the *King's Mirror* must be sought in some dramatic representation of the creation story. The account of the trial was made the theme of two poems in Old French which have been attributed to the English ecclesiastics Archbishop Langton and Bishop Grosseteste, both of whom were contemporaries of our Norwegian author.

Homilies were written on this theme in the twelfth century by St. Bernard of Clairvaux (Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, CLXXXIII, 770) and by Hugh of St. Victor (*ibid.*, CLXXVII, 623-626). There is a still earlier version of the story in a homily attributed, though for no good reason, to the Venerable Bede. According to this story a man has a son and four daughters named Mercy, Truth, Peace, and Justice. He also has a servant whom he wishes to try by giving him an easy task. The servant fails and is handed over to the executioner. The daughters now come into violent disagreement, but the son finds a way out of the difficulty: he saves the servant and succeeds in bringing the sisters into agreement. *Ibid.*, XCIV, 505-507.

W. Scherer, in *Zeitschrift für deutsche Altertumskunde*, N. F., IX, 414-416, finds traces of the legend in Talmudic sources. In the Hebrew story, however, the disagreement is over the expediency of creating man, Mercy favoring and Truth opposing the project. The ultimate source appears to be *Psalms*, lxxxv, 10: "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other."

For bibliographical information see L. Petit du Juleville, *Les Mystères*, II, 359.

severe and merciless. Moreover, a king does justice to all men when he does justice to any man or woman; but all decisions which imply punishment he must always consider in the presence of these four sisters; and it must be such as will bring them into agreement, so that they can kiss and embrace each other, in which case the judgment will be neither too lenient nor too severe. A king ought to consider very carefully how to bring the minds of the sisters into agreement; for in all trials they are arranged and seated apart in groups; Truth and Justice on one side of the court and Mercy and Peace on the other. They should be agreed and unanimous in every case; but it frequently occurs that Peace and Mercy give the whole suit over to Truth and Justice, though all unite in the verdict none the less. Sometimes it happens that each of the sisters has a full voice in the decision according to right reckoning; but at other times it may be that the larger share falls to Peace and Mercy; but the sisters are unanimous in the verdict none the less. It has also happened at times that, after a verdict has been reached and confirmed, Mercy and Peace have exercised leniency because of the prayers and repentance of him who was in need of it.

XLVI

AN EXAMPLE OF RIGHTEOUS SEVERITY IN JUDGMENT
DRAWN FROM THE STORY OF GOD'S
CONDEMNATION OF LUCIFER

Son. It looks to me now as if this is a more intricate matter than I thought earlier; for it must require great understanding and insight to harmonize the opinions

of these sisters so that they will always be unanimous, seeing that the verdict sometimes leans more to one side than to the other. For you remarked that at times the whole verdict falls to Truth and Justice and no leniency is shown, while at other times the larger share may fall to Peace and Mercy; and you also stated that sometimes a sentence has been modified after it was agreed to and confirmed. Now you have stated that one can find examples of most things, if one looks for them; and if there are any instances of such proceedings, I should like to hear about them, so that the subject may look clearer to me and also to others who may hear about it. And it must surely be the highest duty of kings to be well informed on such things, as on all other subjects, since they will need them very frequently.

Father. The world is now so ancient that, no matter what comes to pass, one is likely to find that similar events have occurred before; and nothing is likely to happen of which a learned man can find no examples. But of the fact that the entire judgment may fall to Truth and Justice, no mercy being shown, there are cases which occurred so early that I know of none before them. When Lucifer, an angel in heaven, turned traitor and committed a base crime against his Lord, Truth and Justice condemned him to swift downfall without hope of pardon. Into this condemnation all his comrades and counsellors fell with him. And these were the crimes which God punished with a merciless doom.

XLVII

A FURTHER DISCUSSION OF VERDICTS AND PENALTIES
WITH ILLUSTRATIONS FROM THE STORY OF
LUCIFER'S REBELLION AND DOWNFALL
AND OF THE SIN AND PUNISHMENT
OF THE FIRST MAN AND WOMAN

Son. I must ask you not to take offence if the questions which I wish to bring up should seem childish and ill advised; but since I do not fully understand the subject that I intend to ask about next, it may also be that there are others who do not understand it any better than I. And it is that matter about the serpent, which, you said, came to Eve, and speaking to her like a man egged her on to transgress the law. Now I wish to ask whether the serpent, unlike other beasts, was created with power of speech; or whether other animals could speak in those days, though now they are all dumb; and for what reason the serpent wished to lead the woman into transgression.

Father. We have had a very lengthy speech before us, and if we were to comment on the whole, it would lengthen very much a discussion that is already long; but certain it is, we have spoken very few words which would not be in need of comment, if a well informed man, who thoroughly understands all these speeches, should come to the task. But I believe it is more advisable for us to continue as we have been doing since we began our conversation, and leave the task of glossing our remarks to others who may hear them later and are willing to do the work with faithful care. Still, inasmuch as every

question looks toward some reply or solution, it is proper that I should enlarge somewhat on this speech, so as to make the subject a little clearer to you and to others who do not understand it better than you do. I shall, however, run over it in a few words only, for I do not care much to comment on my own remarks.

You have asked whether serpents and other beasts were created with the power of speech in the days when Adam was appointed keeper of Paradise, and you shall know of a truth that the gift of speech was not given to any bodily creature but man. And since you wish to know why speech was given to the serpent and why it wished to lead the woman into transgression, I shall now proceed to explain. The explanation begins with the fact that God created angels before men. The angels were immortal spirits, free from all corporal weakness, and endowed with great beauty. But though created with perfect beauty, they were held subject to this law, that they must show love and obedience toward their Creator in humility and without deceit. It was promised them that they should keep their beauty and all the other honors that God had given them, as long as they kept this law; at the same time God gave them full freedom to violate the law, if they wished; for He spoke to them in this wise: "Since you were all created at the same moment and none was begotten by another, each one of you shall decide for himself and none for another whether these laws that I have now ordained shall be kept or broken. And if there are those who transgress them, they shall be driven out of this life of bliss; while those who observe the laws shall continue to enjoy un-

ceasing happiness and unending life in my noble service. And I give you all a free choice to keep these laws or to break them as you may prefer, in order that those who observe them may be set apart as my chosen jewels, while those who violate them shall suffer hatred and be driven into cruel thralldom and wretched service."

These angels were all fair, but one was more handsome than all the rest, wherefore he was called Lucifer; he was appointed chief of many angels and a great multitude made obeisance to him in service and friendship. But God having finished his speech, Lucifer turned away from God with all his following as if toward the north and spoke thus: "Why should we suffer threats from God in return for our service, seeing that we have power, beauty and numbers in full measure to maintain our prestige? Now I intend, like God, to set up a high-seat in the northern part of heaven * and to extend a wise control over half of heaven or even more." Then God answered and said to Lucifer: "Since thou hast broken the law by treacherous rebellion, thou canst no longer have habitation with us; and whereas thou wouldst enjoy dominion, depart to the kingdom that is prepared for thee, where thou shalt have suffering instead of freedom, misery instead of bliss, sorrows of every kind but no joy. Let all those go with thee who did not oppose thy design." And as God looked upon them in his wrath, all the heavens trembled before His countenance; and His enemies fled with a terrible downfall, and they suf-

* The statement that Lucifer planned to set up a rival throne in the northern regions of heaven also appears in the *Michaels Saga* (*Heilagra Manna Sögur*, I, 677). It was apparently a common belief in medieval Christendom and was based on *Isaiah*, xiv, 13.

ferred a horrible change of countenance in the loss of their beauty. Thereupon they sought out the places that were assigned to them and were scattered about in all the caves of hell, each appointed to a separate service. In this way darkness was separated from light.

But when God had made man and had given him a blissful life in Paradise, Lucifer said to his companions: "It is evidently God's intention to give this one the dominion from which He drove me out, unless he shall act counter to God's will. Even if God should appoint other angels in our stead, we could never allow it, if we could do anything to prevent it; but our disgrace would be too great, if a man formed of clay or the filthy dust of the earth were to enter into the eternal happiness from which we were expelled. Therefore we must fight incessantly against everyone who has such ambitions and revenge our injuries with fierce hatred upon all those whom we can overcome. Now I shall try to gain a victory over the first man that God has created, so that my companions may be able to overcome those who come later." Then he armed himself with seven wiles from which he expected great aid: the first was venomous envy; the second, burning hatred; the third, false cunning; the fourth, specious deception; the fifth, haughty arrogance; the sixth, covetous self-seeking; the seventh, lustful desire. Then he said to himself: "Inasmuch as I am now an invisible spirit, I cannot visibly come to have speech with physical man, unless I adorn my ugly countenance with a certain corporeal beauty. I shall therefore enter this serpent which God has created with the face of a maiden and which most resembles

man in beauty; and I shall speak with his tongue to Eve, Adam's wife, and learn from her whether they are created to full freedom without obedience to law, or whether God has given them laws to keep, through which I may be able to ruin their covenant with Him."

Thereupon this envious spirit sought the serpent that is now called the asp, which in those days walked with upright form on two feet like man and had a face like a maiden's, as we have just said. And when the evil minded spirit came to Eve concealed in the body of this serpent, he made use of the artifice that is called specious deception, for he spoke to Eve with seductive sweetness using these words: "Blessed is thy husband and thou likewise." This praise he did not give them out of good will; rather did he praise their happiness in order to drag them into misery through hatred and envy, and he used false cunning when he asked Eve to tell him whether God had given everything to Adam to control and to enjoy without restriction. But when Eve in return for his sweet words had given the desired information, and he heard that death was to be their part if they transgressed, he was glad, and then made use of haughty arrogance in suggesting to Eve that they could become like God in knowledge in this respect, that they might be able to know good from evil. But he used lustful desire when he bade her try how sweet and fragrant was the apple of knowledge which was forbidden her. And he employed covetous self-seeking when he caused Eve to take for her own what God had earlier forbidden her; for God had given everything into the power of Adam and Eve, except this tree; but they longed to

have this even without permission, though everything else was in their power. They knew this one difference between good and evil, that good was better than evil; wherefore they feared the death that was assured them. But having never tasted the bitterness of evil, they could not know what great misery they would suffer for transgression; but they thought it would be a great distinction to be like God in knowledge, and to know the difference between good and evil things. But when the serpent urged Eve to eat of the apples of knowledge, she began to fear death, and replied thus to the serpent: "I fear that, if I eat, I shall die, for such is God's threat. Now do you eat first while I look, and if you do not die, I will eat, for if this fruit really does possess death dealing powers, it will surely prove baneful to other living beings besides me." Then the spirit that was concealed in the serpent said to himself: "I may indeed eat the apple, for it will make me no more guilty or mortal, inasmuch as I am already in the full wrath of God." But these words the woman did not hear. Then Eve took an apple and placed it in the serpent's mouth and he ate forthwith. And when she saw that it did him no harm, she immediately picked another apple and ate; and she found it very sweet, just as the serpent had told her.

Thereupon the serpent vanished from Eve's sight; but she called Adam her husband and told him these things. But because he, too, feared the death that God had threatened, he would not eat, unless he should see Eve eat first. So Eve took two more apples and boldly ate the one forthwith, for she had already tasted the

sweetness of the fruit, and instead of feeling shame for what she had already done, she longed to taste it oftener. When Adam saw that it did her no harm (and he even observed a pleasurable sweetness upon her lips), he took the apple that she had offered him and ate just as she had done. But when they had eaten the apple, their eyes were opened to a greater knowledge than they had had before, just as the serpent had predicted: for immediately they were ashamed of their naked limbs, since they saw that the bodies of the birds were covered with feathers and those of the beasts with hair, while their own bodies were naked, and they were much ashamed of that. But most of all did it shame them to know that their transgression had made them guilty before God; and they bore their bodies in fear and were ashamed of their naked limbs. Soon they went to hide among the trees, thus giving proof of their shortsightedness, for they did not realize that God had such knowledge of His handiwork and all the things that He had made, that neither bushes nor forests could hide them from His sight, since even the secret hiding places in the caverns of hell lie bare and visible before His eyes at all times.

But while Adam was in hiding, God spoke to the spirit that was concealed in the serpent: "Through pride and evil intent thou didst raise the first rebellion, there being none to ensnare thee, only thine own pride and envy; wherefore Mine anger rages against thee without mercy, and thou has forfeited eternal happiness and all hope of returning to it. Thou hast now a second time stirred My heart to anger because of the

sin that has just been committed. Adam will have to suffer punishment for his transgression, but he shall still have hope of return and mercy, because he came into My wrath on account of thy wickedness and seductive guile. And as thou overcamest Adam's wife while she was yet a virgin, so shall one of her daughters, also a virgin, win a triumph over thee. And just as thou seemest now to have led Adam with all his possessions and kinship as spoils into thy dominion, so shall one of his sons search all thy garners and carry all thy treasures away as spoils; and leading forth Adam and all his faithful kinsmen out of thy power in a glorious triumph, he shall appoint him to an honored place among his sons in the kingdom which thou wert fittingly deprived of. And as a green tree bore the fruit through which thou hast now won thy victory, so shall a dry tree bear the fruit through which thy victory shall be brought to naught." Then God spoke to the serpent in which the spirit had concealed himself: "Cursed art thou before all the beasts upon earth; because thou hast received Mine enemy and concealed him from the eyes of Eve to the end that, hidden in thee, he might win a victory over mankind. Therefore shalt thou lose the likeness to a maiden's face which thy countenance has borne and shalt henceforth bear a grim and ugly face hateful to mankind; thou shalt lose the feet that bore thy body upright and henceforth crawl upon breast and belly. Bitter and unclean dust shall be thy food, because thou atest of the apple which thou tookest from the hand of Eve. Thou shalt be a self-chosen vessel of venom and death as evidence that thou didst hide venomous envy

in thy body. I declare the covenant sundered between thee and all mankind; thy head and neck shall be crushed under the heel and the tread of men in revenge for the treachery which mankind has suffered through thy slippery cunning. And since thou didst cause man to break the law with his mouth and in eating, the spittle that comes forth from the mouth of a fasting man shall prove as dangerous a venom to thy life, if thou taste it, as thy venom is to man, if he taste it."

Then God, calling Adam and Eve, asked where they were. And Adam replied: "We hid ourselves, Lord, being ashamed to appear naked before Thy face." In the first word that Adam answered God, he lied to Him; for they knew themselves guilty of violating the law and hid for that reason; but Adam concealed this in the answer that he gave to God. Then God said to him: "Why should you be more ashamed of your nakedness now than when we last talked together, unless it be that you have increased in knowledge from eating the apples that I forbade you?" But when Adam saw that he could not conceal how they had broken the law, he sought to escape by placing the blame for the act on another rather than on himself, for he answered in these words: "If I had been alone about my affairs and if Thou hadst not given me this woman to advise with me, I should have kept the appointed law and would not have broken Thy commands." These words added greatly to Adam's guilt in God's eyes, for he sought defense rather than mercy. But if he had spoken in this wise: "Remember now, O Lord, that I am formed of fragile stuff like a pot of brittle clay, and am in greater

need of Thy forbearance and mercy than the merits of my case can demand, for in my weakness I have fallen into great guilt against Thee, O Lord, because of my transgression," — then his guilt would at once have been lessened in the sight of God, inasmuch as he would be seeking mercy but not defense. But when God heard Adam replying as if excusing himself, He said as if in wrath: "Thou shalt put no blame upon Me for creating the woman; for I gave her to thee to be a delight and a companion, not that thou shouldst commit law-breaking by her counsel. I even warned thee not to transgress and told thee what guilt threatened if thou didst break the law. Why then didst thou follow thy wife's miserable advice rather than My saving counsel, if thou didst not do it through pride and avarice, wishing to equal Me in knowledge and therefore eager to know what was not promised thee?"

After that God spoke to Eve: "Why didst thou egg thy husband on to transgress?" And Eve was anxious that another should bear the blame for her guilt rather than herself, for she spoke in this wise: "This crafty serpent gave me that evil advice; had he not been created or appeared before me, I should not have transgressed or egged on my husband to transgress." When God heard Eve's excuse, He spoke in His wrath: "It looks to Me as if you both wish to blame Me for your law-breaking: Adam blamed Me for having created thee to advise with him, and now thou findest fault with Me for having created the serpent. I created the serpent as I created all the other beasts of the earth, but I did not give him to you as a counsellor; on the contrary, I made

him subject to your dominion like all the other beasts of the earth. I warned you both to commit no sin and told you to look for death, if you did. Now your deed appears no better in your defense than before in the transgression; wherefore you shall suffer the death with which I threatened you. Though you may not immediately fall down dead, you shall, nevertheless, in your death suffer a long punishment for your offence, and all your offspring shall be responsible with you for this transgression. And the while that you live upon earth you shall suffer sorrowful distress instead of enjoying the blissful freedom which you knew not how to keep. And whereas thou didst transgress before Adam, I will increase thy troubles beyond what you are both to suffer: thou shalt be subject to the control of thy husband and to all his commands, and shalt therefore seem of lesser importance and lower in the sight of thy sons. The children that thou shalt conceive in lustful passion thou shalt bring forth in pain and imminent peril; it shall also be thy duty to give thy children all forms of service in toil and troublesome care while bringing them up."

Then God said: "Adam has now become as wise as any one of us, knowing good and evil. Have care that he does not eat from the tree of life without permission, as he did of the apples of knowledge, lest he live eternally in his guilt." Thereupon God appointed Cherubim to guard the path leading to the tree of life with a flaming sword which constantly turned its fiery edge in every direction so that none could pass forward without permission. Then God said to Adam: "Because

thou didst hearken to thy wife's evil advice rather than to my good counsel and hast eaten of the forbidden fruit, the earth, which gave thee all manner of desirable fruit in her motherly kindness, shall be cursed through thy deed. As if in sorrowful wrath, she shall refuse thee such herbs as thou mayest think suitable for food: thistles and weeds shall she give thee for herbs, unless thou till her soil with labor and drench it with thy sweat; for henceforth thou shalt gain thy food upon earth with toil." Thereafter God gave Adam and Eve coats of skin and said to them: "Since you are ashamed of your naked limbs, cover yourselves now with the garments of travail and sorrow and fare forth into the wide fields to find your food with irksome toil. And finally you shall rest in the deathlike embraces of earth and be changed again naturally into the mortal materials from which you were made in the beginning." Then said Adam: "For justice and mercy I thank Thee, O Lord, for I see clearly how greatly I have sinned; likewise do I own Thy grace in that I am not to suffer merciless destruction like Lucifer. Sorrowing shall I descend into the deathlike shadows of hell; yet I shall ever rejoice in the hope of returning; for in this I trust to Thee, O Lord, that Thou wilt show me the light of life even in the darkness of death. And I shall ever look forward to the day when he, who is now rejoicing in my misfortune as in a victory won, shall be afflicted by our returning as one who is overcome and deprived of victory." Then Eve said: "Though we now depart in sorrow, Lord, because of our great misdoing, we shall take joy in Thy merciful lenience in our distress." Then God disappeared

from their sight; and they began to till the earth as God had commanded.

Now I have done as you requested, having explained briefly why the serpent sought speech with the woman and what caused him to egg the woman on to violate the law. Still, I have taken up only what is most easily grasped in this speech; for the task of glossing our discourse after deep meditation I prefer to leave to others. But let us continue straight ahead in the discussion as we have begun, since we do not have time to do both.

XLVIII

A COMMENTARY ON THE STORY OF LUCIFER

Son. I now see clearly why you regard the answers to my last questions as glosses and interpretations of the speeches which you gave earlier rather than a continuation of our original plan; and I fear that, if I should ask you to enlarge further upon this subject, you will consider my questions unwise. But having been granted freedom to ask about whatever I have the curiosity to know, I shall venture another question: and I shall continue to look for good answers as before, even though my questions be childish. Now you have brought out that, when the serpent spoke to the woman as he did, it was the spirit speaking with the serpent's tongue. You have likewise shown me why the woman was led into sin; that Lucifer was inspired by malicious envy to hinder man from coming into the dominion from which he himself had been expelled. And in your discussion of the judgments of God you had something to

say both about Lucifer and about Adam, which I am not sure has often been heard before. Now if I should on occasion recall these remarks and repeat them as I have heard you state them, it may be that someone hearing me will say that he has never heard this account before; and therefore I want to ask you to tell me what facts I could state in my reply, so that I shall not seem to withdraw my statements on account of ignorance but rather find such means to support them, that all will think them true rather than false.

Father. The glosses to a speech are like the boughs and branches of a tree. First the roots send up a stem which again branches out into many limbs and boughs. And whatever limb you take, if you examine it with proper care, you will find it joined to the stem which originally sprang up from the roots; and all the boughs and branches draw nourishment from the roots from which the stem grows. But if you hew off a limb and cast it far away from the tree, and one should find it who knows not where it grew, it will look to him like every other branch which he finds on his way, seeing that he does not know where it has grown. But if he carries it back to the stem from which it was cut and fits it there, the branch itself will testify as to what roots it sprang from. It is the same with the interpretation of a sermon; if a man knows how to present a speech properly, he will also know how to interpret it correctly. But as I hear that some things have been introduced into this discussion which have not often been heard, I will now do the questioning for a while, since I have answered more than I have asked. And first I

wish to ask whether this speech included anything that you already knew.

Son. There were a few things but not many. I have heard it quoted from Lucifer's words that he intended to set his throne as high as that of God; but the answer that God gave to this I had never heard interpreted before, but now you have explained it.

Father. Let me ask again: who do you suppose it was that, standing by, heard Lucifer's boastful and treacherous words and quoted them afterwards?

Son. I have never heard his name spoken and I am not sure that they were told by any one who heard them at the beginning.

Father. But this you shall know of a surety, that if Lucifer's words have been quoted by one who heard them in the beginning, he surely must have heard those replies of God also, which I have just given; and he could have reported both speeches, had he wished, since he heard either both or neither. But if he reported Lucifer's treacherous boasting as he divined it, he surely could have thought out God's truthful statement of his vengeance in the same way; for either both or neither would be true. For at the very moment when Lucifer transgressed, whether in thought or in words, God had already purposed all the vengeance that was to befall him from the first hour to the last. So great and all-sufficient are God's thoughts and wisdom, that the vision of the divine foresight sees in the twinkling of an eye all the events that shall come to pass from the first hour to the very last. But He withholds in divine patience all the things that He intends shall come to pass, until

suitable times appear; and He will let everything happen as He has purposed it heretofore. Now if God should have endowed any one with such great insight and wisdom that he could know all the thoughts of God and should report them as if God had disclosed them in word or speech, he would by no means be telling falsehoods; for all that God has purposed has been told him in his thoughts, whether his lips have spoken about them or not. The apostle Paul tells us that God has given men his Holy Spirit with a definite office and activity: some receive a spirit of prophecy, some a spirit of knowledge and wisdom, some a spirit of eloquence, some a spirit of understanding, and some a spirit of skill; * some have these gifts in large measure, others in less; some enjoy one of these gifts, others two, still others three, while some have all, each one as God wills to endow him.

But those who, like King David, have received both the spirit of understanding and of eloquence, have ventured to compose speeches and write books in order that the speeches shall not perish. In some places David has told of God's purposes, in other places of His deeds, and in still other places he has reported His words; and those who in times past have written glosses to the psalms which David composed have had more to say about what was in David's mind than about the words that he wrote. For to every word they have added long comments of what David had in thought when he spoke this word; and in these comments they point out the meaning which he had in his thoughts at every word

* *I Corinthians*, xii, 4-10.

that he wrote in the Psalter. In like manner they have proceeded, who have interpreted the words of the Evangelists, and they have brought out much that the Evangelists have left unsaid. Thus they have shown that their comments are on the words of thought which the lips had left unspoken. And if one has received the God-given spirit of a perfect understanding, he has a gift of such a nature that, when he hears a few spoken words, he perceives many words of thought. But David did not himself gloss the Psalter for the reason that he wished to leave to others the task of expressing all those thoughts which came up in his mind, while he continued writing the Psalms as originally planned. Thus all do who have a speech on the tongue which ought to be interpreted: they proceed with the discourse as planned and begun, and leave to others the task of expressing in words what is in their thoughts. Still, you should know that no one has glossed the sayings of David who sat by him, while he was composing the Psalter, and asked what was in his mind at the time. And from this you will perceive that it is the grace of the spirit of insight which guides such men to examine the foundations of the sermons that they hear. Next they investigate how widely the roots ramify which lie beneath the speech; they consider carefully how many limbs grow out of it; and finally they make a count of the branches that sprout from each limb. They also note precisely what bough they take for themselves, that they may be able to trace it correctly back to the roots from which it originally grew. Now if you understand this thoroughly and if you investigate with care and precision every-

thing that you hear told, you will not fall into error, no matter whether the comments that you hear be right or wrong, if God has given you the spirit that leads to a right understanding. For every man who is gifted with proper insight and gets into the right path at the beginning will be able to find the highways of reason and to determine what expressions are suitable and will best fit the circumstances. Now gather from these things whatever you can that may give insight; but it does not seem necessary to discuss them further.

XLIX

INSTANCES IN WHICH GOD HAS ALLOWED THE DECISION
TO BE FRAMED ACCORDING TO THE STERN
DEMANDS OF TRUTH AND JUSTICE

Son. God reward you, sire, for being so patient in answering all the questions that I am asking. I find, however, that you think my queries wander about in a childish way, but as I cannot keep to the subject of the conversation that we have begun, my questions will come down here and there, as one might expect of youthful ignorance. Still, it seems that it is better to have asked than not about the matter that I brought up last, namely, how one is to determine whether the glosses are correct or not. Now I understand perfectly your statement that a man does not tell a lie about God, if he tells God's purposes as if they were His own words; for whatever God has determined in His own soul, He has already spoken to Himself in His thoughts, whether He has uttered them with His lips or not; wherefore

those things may be interpreted as if spoken, because in His mind He has spoken all that to Himself. This, too, is clear to me, that, although no one is able to divine what God had in mind at the beginning, He has Himself revealed it in letting those things come to pass which He had thought and purposed; for it seems very evident that all those things which God has allowed to occur, He had thought upon and wisely planned in his own mind, before they came to pass. It is also quite clear to me that those who have added explanatory glosses to the writings of David, or other men who have written sermons and set them in books, have developed their interpretations by studying out what fundamental thought or purpose had since the beginning lain underneath the words. Afterwards they wisely considered this, too, with what truth probability might be able to account for every branch and twig of that discourse, so that the contents might be revealed. Now since these things begin to look somewhat clearer to me, it may be that I shall continue to reflect upon them, if God gives me the necessary insight. But since I realize that you feel it would be a large and tedious task both to continue the discourse already begun and to make suitable comments, I will now ask you to return to the subject before us and to continue setting forth the judgment of God, giving cases in which He allowed the sentence to be carried out with severity according to the verdict of Justice and Truth, and others in which He showed greater leniency.

Father. The following instances occurred long after the fall but had a similar outcome. Pharaoh, the king of

Egypt, suffered a merciless doom by the judgment of Truth and Justice.* Dathan and Abiram were justly doomed and destroyed.† When Joshua led the people of Israel into the land that God had promised them God ordered him to punish the people who dwelt in the city called Jericho with such severity that whatever was living should perish.‡ Long after that, when King Saul led an invasion into Amalek, God commanded him to slay everything that was living; but Saul incurred the anger of God because he did not carry out what was commanded.§ The case of Judas, one of the apostles of God, is among the examples that belong to a much later date: for Truth and Justice condemned him without mercy for dastardly treachery toward his Lord. There are many similar cases, though we have given these only; and, inasmuch as our speech would get too long, we cannot include in a single discourse all the examples that we know resemble these. But when God decreed all these punishments which we have now recounted, the sisters were all on the judgment seat with Him, Truth and Justice, Mercy and Peace, and they all agreed with Him and kissed and embraced each other.

L

OTHER INSTANCES IN WHICH THE ARGUMENTS OF PEACE
AND MERCY HAVE HAD GREATER WEIGHT

Son. It is quite evident that in the cases which you have now recounted, Truth and Justice had a larger part in the verdict than Peace and Mercy. But no one can doubt that the sisters were all agreed in these de-

* *Exodus*, xiv.† *Numbers*, xvi.‡ *Joshua*, vi.§ *I Samuel*, xv.

cisions, for we may be sure that God never passes a merciless judgment. One will consequently need to ponder these things with careful attention and close thinking; for the judgments of God are largely concealed from men. Therefore I wish to ask you to point out those cases in which Mercy and Peace have chiefly dictated the verdict, so that I may get insight into dooms of both kinds, seeing that examples of both are to be found.

Father. There are so many cases of either class, that we cannot include all the verdicts in one discussion; still, we can point out a few of them, in order that both your questions may be answered. The following are events which occurred long ago, when Aaron and Ur, the bishops,* committed a great sin against God in that they gave His people two calves made of molten gold, through which the entire nation was led astray from the faith; for the people called these calves the gods of Israel and brought sacrifices to them as to God. But when Moses came down to the people (he had been up on the mountain where he had spoken to God Himself), the bishops ran to meet him, deeply repenting their sins; and, falling at Moses' feet, they begged him to intercede for them with God, lest He be angered with them according to their deserts. But when God saw how deeply the bishops repented, He heard Moses' prayer, and the bishops retained the dignities which they had before, and they did penance for their sin. The instance

* *Exodus*, xxxii. No high priest by the name of Ur is mentioned in this connection; but Hur, the son of Caleb, is associated with Aaron on two earlier occasions. See *ibid.*, xvii, 10; xxiv, 14. There was a legend that Ur refused to make the golden calf and that the people spitting into his face suffocated him with the spittle. Petrus Comestor, *Historia Scholastica*, c. 73: Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, CXCVIII, 1189.

that I have now related is one of those in which the greater share in the decision was assigned to Peace and Mercy, though Truth and Justice also consented to the doom; for the bishops would have suffered death for this offence, if Mercy had not been more lenient with them than they deserved. The following event is like this but happened much later: King David fell into this great sin, that he committed adultery with Uriah's wife and afterwards brought about the death of Uriah himself. After Uriah's death David took his wife and had her for his own, and surely he deserved death for these sins. But he repented his misdeeds so deeply before God and begged forgiveness so humbly for the sins confessed, that God heard his prayer and did not take away his kingship, but even confirmed him in it, though he had committed these crimes.*

The following events occurred much later at the time when our Lord Jesus Christ was on earth among men. The bishops of the Jews and all their other learned men became very hostile toward him and were constantly striving to find something for which they might reproach him. So they took a woman who had openly committed adultery and was worthy of death according to the law of Moses; this woman they brought before Jesus and told him of her crimes. They also said that the law condemned her to die and asked what sentence he would pass in this case. Jesus replied that he who had never committed a sin should cast the first stone upon her. Then they turned away quickly, not daring to question him further, for they all knew themselves

* *II Samuel*, xii.

to have sinned. But Jesus said to the woman: "Woman, since none of those who accused thee has passed judgment in thy case, neither will I condemn thee to die; go in peace, but henceforth beware of sin." There is another instance which is like those that I related earlier, and which happened in the night when Jesus was seized. His apostle Peter had boastfully protested that he would never forsake him, though all others should leave him, and that he would suffer death with Jesus before he would desert him like a coward. But in the same night when Jesus was seized, Peter denied three times that he had been with him, and the third time he confirmed the statement with an oath that he had not been Jesus' man. Then he went away out of the hall where Jesus was held and immediately began to repent his sin and all his words and wept bitterly. Nevertheless, after Jesus had risen, Peter's sins were forgiven, and he retained all the honors that had been promised him before. There is still another event which came to pass a few days later when our Lord was crucified. Two thieves were crucified with him, one on either side; both had been guilty of the same crimes, murder and robbery. But while they hung on the cross, one of them took thought to repent and implored mercy of Jesus, though he, too, like the thieves, hung on a cross. His sins were pardoned and he was given sure promise of paradise on that very day; but his companion was condemned according to his deeds.

LI

THE REASONS FOR THIS DIVERSITY IN
THE VERDICTS OF GOD

Son. If earthly kings and other chiefs, who are appointed to act as judges, are to adapt their decisions to the examples that you have now given, they must find it very important to learn precisely what each suit is based upon; for in many of these instances, it looks as if the cases were somewhat alike in appearance. Still, all the decisions in the earlier examples led to severe punishments, while in the later ones they all led to mercy and forgiveness. Therefore I now wish to ask you why Pharaoh, Dathan, and Abiram, the people who dwelt in Jericho, and those of Amalek, who were punished by King Saul, were all destroyed without mercy.

Father. These things were all done at the command of Justice and Truth, though Peace and Mercy consented. For Moses daily performed many miracles before King Pharaoh and commanded him to release God's people; and he might have released them, had he wished, without suffering any injury thereby. He made constant promises that it should be done, but he never kept either word or promise. Now it was right that he should perish in his stubborn wickedness and evil-doing, since he would accept neither mercy nor pardon, though he had the opportunity. Dathan and Abiram, when Moses told them that they had done evil, became angry and refused to repent; and they perished without mercy because they sought no mercy. Those who dwelt in Jericho and Amalek had heard for many days that they

had done evil both to God's people and against His will but they offered no atonement; on the contrary, they proposed to take up arms in their defense, wherefore they were overcome by a merciless revenge. But those whom I pointed out to you in the later accounts, Aaron, Ur, David, and the others who were mentioned in those examples, did not conceal their wickedness, but confessed their misdeeds as they were; hoping for pardon, they begged mercy and clemency, and offered to atone, as He should determine, Who, they knew, had the decision in His power. And they promised that nevermore would they fall into such guilt, if they might become fully reconciled.

LII

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED

Son. I now wish to ask you why such a great distinction was made in the cases of Peter and Judas, though their offences appear similar. Judas returned the money that he had received and repented his evil deed; he confessed that he had sold his innocent Lord, and threw away the silver, saying that he would not keep what had come to him so wrongfully. Now he was destroyed, though he repented; while Peter was forgiven at once, because he repented.

Father. Judas fell in the beginning into sin through avarice and love of wealth and took a bribe to betray his Lord. His repentance was such that he could not hope for pardon, and he asked for no mercy but punished himself with a sudden death. But Peter wept

bitterly in his repentance, and, hoping for mercy, implored forgiveness. Furthermore, Judas had the greater guilt, for he sold his Lord; and though he repented, he craved no pardon; and he did not abide the judgment of God, but condemned himself forthwith. But Peter denied his Lord through sudden fear and repented immediately in great sorrow; he submitted to the judgment of God and abided it, and did not condemn himself as Judas did. There was a similar outcome in the case of the crucified thieves. Though both acknowledged the sins that they had committed, one prayed for mercy and pardon, while the other asked no mercy but spoke in contempt and derision rather than in prayer or serious thought. Therefore these whom we have now named were saved through the merciful judgments of Mercy and Peace, though Truth and Justice agreed to the verdicts.

LIII

INSTANCES IN WHICH GOD HAS MODIFIED HIS SENTENCES AND THE REASONS FOR SUCH MODIFICATIONS

Son. I am beginning to see these things more clearly now and to understand why it is that the larger share in a verdict is sometimes assigned to Justice and Truth and at other times to Peace and Mercy. And now I want to ask you to discuss those cases which you mentioned earlier in which God modified the sentence agreed upon, and to state the causes that led to this.

Father. To this class belong certain events which occurred a long time ago in the days when Moses was upon the mountain called Sinai. In those days the great

mass of the people sinned grievously and even fell into whoredom, cohabiting with women of the heathen race. But so strictly had God forbidden this, that everyone who fell into that sin was held worthy of death. Then God said to Moses: "Now shalt thou cease speaking with Me that My wrath may have time to wax hot against this people which I gave into thy charge. For they have fallen into such grievous sins against My commandments that I intend to consume them all in My fierce wrath; and I will give thee another people, far better and stronger and more numerous than this one." At this point it would almost seem as if a definite sentence had been passed in the case of this nation. Moses, however, asked permission to intercede briefly in behalf of the people of Israel and, this being granted, he spoke these words. "I pray Thee, O Lord, to turn from Thy wrath and do not destroy Thy people, though they have done ill. Let not the Egyptians have this to say, that Thou didst lead Thy people out of Egypt and out of their dominion to consume them in the mountains and the desert; or that Thou wert unable to lead Thy people into the land which Thou hadst promised them from the beginning. Remember, O Lord, Thy servants Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, and do not destroy the generations that have sprung from Israel's kin which Thou hast Thyself promised to multiply upon earth and to lead securely into the land that is now controlled by Thine enemies." * God heard the prayer of Moses; His wrath was appeased, and He did not slay the people as He had threatened; but He gave their

* *Ezodus*, xxxii, 7-14.

punishment into the hands of Moses, instructing him that they must not wholly escape chastisement, though it should not be so severe as God had threatened earlier. Moses returned hastily to the camp and coming upon the people in a tempestuous spirit and in fierce wrath, he slew many thousand men in that day, and in this way pacified the wrath of God. Now this example shows how God lessened a penalty imposed, in that He appeased His wrath before Moses' prayer. And it shows that neither of the sisters, Truth or Justice, suffered in her rights by this judgment, inasmuch as Moses slew a great host to pacify the wrath of God. But Peace and Mercy also had their rights, seeing that less was done than had been decreed at first.

This is another instance that shows how God has modified a judgment already passed. He sent Jonah the prophet to Niniveh with orders to tell the king and all the people of the city that within thirty days Niniveh should be destroyed with all that was therein. Jonah did as God commanded and told these things as true tidings. But when the king understood that the people were of a truth in danger of divine wrath (for the nation was full of whoredoms and wickedness of every form) he descended from his throne, laid aside his royal robes, and did penance and fasted; and he bade all men in the city do likewise, both young and old. And when God saw that they repented of their wickedness with sorrow and penance in many forms, He extended mercy and destroyed neither the city nor the people within it.*

* *Jonah*, iii.

Here is still another instance that points to the same result. Hezekiah was the name of a good king in the land of Israel; he fell ill and meditated deeply about his case, whether God intended to bring him through this illness or to let him die. Then God sent Isaiah His prophet to him; and God said to the prophet that Hezekiah should die of this malady. Isaiah went to the king and said to him: "Take good heed and set your house in order and all your affairs, for God has said that you shall die of this illness and not live." As soon as Isaiah had spoken these words to the king, he departed; but the king turned his face to the wall and prayed for deliverance in these words: "Remember, O Lord, how steadfast I have been in Thy service, for I have always opposed Thine enemies, and this people that Thou hast given into my keeping have I turned from much wickedness which many of them practiced before I came to the kingship. And there are three reasons why I am loath to die so suddenly now of this illness. The first, which I fear the most, is that I may not have kept Thy commandments fully, and if I die in a state of sin I may look for Thy vengeance in my death. The second is that I have not yet turned all Thy people wholly away from their evil ways; and I fear, if I die suddenly now, that they will soon return to their old abominations. The third, which I fear much, is the victory of Thine enemies over Thy people, seeing that my son is a child; and his power to defend the people against Thine enemies may prove less than is required. But if Thou wilt hear my prayer, O Lord, and add a few days to my life, all these things may be brought into a better state than

they are at present." God heard Hezekiah's prayer and said to Isaiah the prophet: "Return quickly to King Hezekiah and tell him different tidings now from what thou toldest before; for I have heard his prayer, and I will add unto the days of his life fifteen years beyond what I had intended for him, and I will deliver all his realm from the attack of his adversaries." *

Here is another instance which belongs to a much later time. In the days when Jesus Christ was here upon earth among men, one of his friends, Lazarus by name, fell ill and died of the illness. Bethany was the name of the town where Lazarus was buried. But when he had lain four days in the grave, Jesus came to Bethany. Now it would seem in Lazarus' case, as in that of all others who have departed from this world, that an irrevocable sentence had been passed, seeing that he had lain four days a dead man in the earth, death having even appointed him a place in his kingdom. Jesus ordered Lazarus' grave to be opened, and calling him he commanded him to tear himself away from the hands of his dead companions. Thereupon Lazarus rose from the dead, and he lived many days after that. There are many other examples of this kind, but these are the ones which we have preferred to bring to light; and since our talk has been quite long, it seems unnecessary to recount others, though they are plentiful.

* *II Kings*, xx; *Isaiah*, xxxviii. The prayer is imaginary.

LIV

THE KING'S PRAYER

Son. The more examples I hear, the more evident is the truth of what you stated earlier in your remarks, namely that it is very necessary for kings and other rulers who are in charge of justice to be widely informed, if they are to adapt their verdicts to the examples that we have now heard.

Father. You should understand this clearly that, since the king holds his title from God, it is surely his duty to suit his decisions to divine examples; and the same is true of all who are appointed to pass judgment, both clerks and laymen. For we no longer have opportunity to ask counsel on any point from God's own lips, as Moses could; wherefore men should live according to the examples that were set in those days when it was possible to inquire of God Himself what His will was on any matter. Therefore, a king ought to keep these examples frequently upon his lips and before his eyes, and such other examples, too, as may give insight for his own decisions. The most favorable time for such meditation is at night or in the early morning when he is sated with sleep. But when the hour to rise comes and it is time for the king to hear the hours, it is his duty to go to church and listen attentively to the mass and to join in the prayers and in chanting the psalms if he knows them. Like every other Christian man who is at prayers, the king ought to attend with as much devotion as if he stood in the presence of God and spoke to God Himself. He should call to mind the words that David

uttered when he spoke in this wise: "I shall ever see the Lord before my face, for He is always at my right hand." *

A king should begin his prayer by showing God that he holds the true faith. Next he should make clear that he gives thought to his earthly dominion and the divine power of God. Thereupon he must confess his sins and misdeeds to God, making clear to Him that he does not consider himself as having come without guilt or as if defending his cause. Next he must beg mercy and forgiveness for the transgressions that he has confessed. He must also show God humbly that he regards himself as coming before His knees as a thrall or a servant, though God has exalted him to power among men. He must not fail to remember others besides himself in prayer: his queen, if he has one, who is appointed to rule and defend the land with him; his bishops and all other learned men who are to aid him in maintaining Christianity, and, therefore, owe the duty to offer prayers for him and for all the other people of the kingdom. He ought also to remember all his other lords and knights in his prayer and all the warriors who assist him in the government. Likewise he must remember the husbandmen, the householders, and all his other subjects who maintain his kingdom by labor or other gainful effort. He should, therefore, remember all, men and women, for it is their duty to offer up holy prayers for him every day. And, if he likes, he may use daily the following prayer, which is in the form that I have

* Probably from *Psalms*, xvi, 8 (*Vulgate*, xv, 8): "I have set the Lord always before me, because He is at my right hand. . . ."

given, but he must pray as devoutly as if he were speaking to God Himself; and these are the words of the prayer.

“O Thou most merciful God, eternal Father! O Thou most honored Conqueror, Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God! O Thou most gentle Comforter, Holy Spirit! O Thou perpetual fount of wisdom and complete and unshaken faith, Holy Trinity! O Thou indivisible Unity, one omnipotent, unchangeable God: Thou Who sittest above the highest summits of heaven and lookest into the hidden depths below! For no creature can escape Thy dominion, though it should wish to flee from Thy wrath. Even though I should mount to heaven, Thou art there before me; and though I crawl down into the lowest hiding places of hell, Thy spiritual dominion is there; and though I were to fly upon the wings of the winds and hide beyond the uttermost boundaries of the ocean solitudes, even there Thy right hand would seize me and lead me back into Thy control. For Thy mind has numbered the sands driven by the winds and by the power of the ocean about all the earth, and Thine eye knows all the drops of the dewy rain. Therefore, I implore Thee, O my Lord, do not enter into the seat of judgment with me, Thy servant, to search out my righteousness; and do not number the multitude of my sins, but turn Thy face away from mine iniquities and cleanse me from my secret faults and wash away all my guilt. For my sins are great and lie heavy upon my head; they are so many that they seem numberless to me in their multitude, — sins that I have committed in vain thinking, in foolish words, in neglecting Thy commandments

and forgetting Thy holy law in every way, in indiscreet testimony and thoughtless oaths, in judging unjustly between men, in excessive avarice, and in all manner of useless and evil works. I acknowledge and confess to Thee, O Lord, calling all Thy saints to witness, that I am so guilty of misdeeds and evil works, that I am already condemned by the multitude of my transgressions, unless I may share in the benefits of the exceeding abundance of Thy mercy and of the good and meritorious intercessions of my Lady, the holy Virgin Mary, and of all the saints in whom Thou hast been well pleased since the world began. For the misdeeds and all the iniquity that I have committed from my childhood to this day are uncovered and revealed unto Thee, even though I might wish to conceal and not confess them; for short-sighted frailty was not ashamed to pursue its evil desires before Thy face. But, O Lord, inasmuch as Thou dost not delight in them who are destroyed in sin, but wouldst rather that they should live and be led aright, and because Thou knowest that man is frail and without strength like the dust of the earth or the crumbling leaf, unless Thou strengthen him with the power of Thy mercy, therefore, I implore Thee, do not punish me with the swift judgment of Thy wrath; but let Thy divine patience give me time and will to repent and ability to do penance. Take away from me, O Lord, envy and pride, despair and stubbornness, injustice and violence, and detestable gluttony; cleanse me from the seven cardinal sins and the cursed vices which spring from them. Give me, O Lord, love and constant hope, true faith and humility, wisdom and justice, and ample

strength to do Thy will at all times. Give me the seven cardinal gifts of the Holy Spirit with all the blessed fruitage that grows out of these; for I am Thy handiwork, created in Thine image, Thy thrall begotten in sin by Thy servant, the son of Thy handmaiden. But Thy mercy has appointed me to Thine office and has exalted me, though unworthy, to the royal dignity and the sacred chieftainship; and Thou hast appointed me to judge and to govern Thy holy people. Therefore, I pray Thee, give more heed to the needs of Thy holy people, which Thou hast appointed me to rule over, than to my merits; but give me the right understanding, self-control and sense of justice, eloquence, purpose, and good intentions, so that I may be able to judge and determine the causes of rich and poor in such a way that Thou wilt be pleased, while they rejoice that justice is done among them. And I pray Thee, O Lord! to pour out Thy spirit of upright understanding upon all my councillors and helpers who assist me in maintaining the government. To my queen, whom Thou hast joined to me with the bonds of marriage, and above all to the hallowed stewards and servants of holy church, the most eminent priest, the bishop of Rome, and all our bishops, abbots, and rulers, to our priests and to all the learned men who are in their charge, — to all these, O Lord, give a chaste and upright spirit, so that they may show their good works and set Thy people good examples and give them right instruction. To the governors and to all those who assist me in guiding and defending the realm, give rightmindedness, abhorrence of evil ways, and the appreciation and love of good

morals. Make mine enemies truly repentant of their evil and wickedness, cause them to desist from their ferocity, and turn them to a true friendship. To Thy people and all the commonalty give knowledge and a will to love Thee, the true God, a right obedience to their superiors, good peace and rich harvests, and security from enemies. Remember, O Lord, in Thy holy mercy, all the races of mankind for whom our Lord Jesus Christ, Thine only begotten son, shed his blood in redemption, whether they be still living in this world or called home in holy patience by Thy commands. To those, O Lord, who are blinded by error and ignorance and therefore cannot discern Thy Holy Trinity, send Thy spirit of insight, that they may know and understand that Thou art the true God and none other; for no one may approach Thee except Thy holy compassion draws him to Thy love. And be not wroth with me, Thy servant, O Lord, because I have dared to speak with Thee at this time, even though I continue in prayer, but incline Thy compassionate ear and hear and grant what I pray for in Thine abundant kindness. I pray Thee, O Lord, never to give me into the hands of mine enemies because of my misdeeds, or to let me become their victim or captive, and never to let mine enemies rejoice in my misfortunes, whether in body or in spirit, visible or invisible; but if I do aught against Thy holy will and commandments, take me in Thy right hand and chastise me, though not according to my deserts but according to the lenient judgment of Thy mercy; and give me abundant power and resolute strength to oppose all antagonism and all deception. Let me suffer no greater

temptations than my weakness can resist; let me not end my days in a sudden death; and do not call me out of this world before I shall have repented and rightly atoned for all my sins; and when the strivings of this world have ceased, let me rest eternally with Thee and Thy saints. And from my heart I pray Thee, O Lord, to give me a lawful heir begotten of my loins, whom it may please Thee in Thy mercy to set after my time in the seat of honor where Thou hast placed me; and let my high-seat never pass into the power of other dynasties, but only to such as shall spring from me, the son inheriting from the father in every case. And grant, O Lord, I pray Thee, that no branches that have sprung from me shall wither or decay; and let them not follow after foolish men into error and neglect, but give them insight and wisdom to understand and to know Thy sacred law, and power and a good purpose to love Thee and Thy commands. For Thou only art the true God, Who liveth and reigneth forever, world without end. Amen." *

Now this prayer that you have just heard is one which the king may offer up, if he wishes, with such other psalms and prayers as he knows. And though he may not always repeat this prayer, he should, nevertheless, pray according to the plan that is outlined in this prayer. And this I verily believe to be his duty every day, until he has heard the hours and the mass, if he means to observe what belongs to his dignity and to his official duties.

* This prayer is a translation of a Latin original which the author has incorporated and given in full. Both the original and the author's translation are given in the manuscripts.

LV

A FURTHER DISCUSSION OF THE KING'S BUSINESS
ESPECIALLY HIS JUDICIAL DUTIES

Son. I believe you have now cleared up for me what you think ought to be a king's business, at night after the season for sleep is past while he is meditating upon the needs of his realm and subjects, and in the morning when he goes to church or to devotional services; and it seems to me that these occupations are both useful and important, so much so that they are indispensable. Now that you have shown me what he should be employed with in the night and early in the morning, I wish to ask you to continue and to point out what he should be occupied with during the day: whether it is your opinion that he should ponder the needs of his kingdom while awake at night in order that he may be able to spend the day with greater freedom, after the custom which I hear that kings now follow in most places, either in riding out with hawks or in joining the chase with dogs, or in some other form of diversion, as I hear that kings are in the habit of doing in most countries; or whether you think that he should be otherwise employed, if he does as he ought to do, and that kings seek these diversions more for the sake of recreation than because their rank demand it.

Father. I surely do believe, with respect to what you have just asked about, that kingship was established and appointed to look after the needs of the whole realm and people rather than for sport and vain amusements. Nevertheless, a king must be allowed to seek diversion

now and then, either with hawks, hounds, horses, or weapons, so that his health and agility at arms or in any form of warfare may be preserved. His chief business, however, is to maintain an intelligent government and to seek good solutions for all the difficult problems and demands which come before him. And you shall know of a truth that it is just as much the king's duty to observe daily the rules of the sacred law and to preserve justice in holy judgments as it is the bishop's duty to preserve the order of the sacred mass and all the canonical hours.

Son. I am inquiring so closely into these things for the reason that many believe the royal dignity to have been founded for such pleasure-giving splendor and unrestrained amusement as kings may desire. But now I see clearly from your remarks that a king ought constantly to labor in the yoke of God; wherefore it seems to me that he must have a great burden to support every day in the serious interest that he must show when the needs of his subjects are presented to him. Therefore I wish to ask you once more to show me clearly what should be a king's duty after the hours have been observed.

Father. It was the custom of old at the time when the royal office was established and enjoyed its greatest splendor, that, when a king no longer stood in fear of his enemies but sat in complete security among his henchmen, he selected a splendid house where he could set up his high-seat, which was also to serve as his judgment seat; and this throne he adorned with every form of royal decoration. Then the king sat down upon it and

observed in what glory and splendor he sat. Next he began to ponder in what way he must occupy this glorious high-seat, so as not to be driven from it with dishonor in spite of his exalted position either because of injustice or malice, indiscretion or folly, inordinate ambition, arrogance, or excessive timidity. Now it looks most reasonable to me that, whereas kingship was originally established in this way as we have just pointed out, a king should continue to maintain the arrangement which was made in the beginning. And as soon as the king comes into this seat which we have just mentioned and has reflected upon all those things which we have just told about, it becomes his duty to pass judgment in the suits and on the needs of his people, if they are presented to him. But when there is no official business brought before him, he should meditate on the source of holy wisdom and study with attentive care all its ways and paths.

LVI

THE SPEECH OF WISDOM

Son. I beg you, sire, not to be displeased with me, though I ask thoughtless and stupid questions; but it looks to me like a difficult task to search out the very sources of wisdom and learn its ways and paths. And therefore I wish to ask you to tell me something about this form of study, so that I may, if possible, derive some insight from it.

Father. It ought not to cause displeasure to have one inquire closely into subjects which one is not likely to understand without some direction. But God's mercy

reveals and makes known many things to mankind which would be largely hidden from them, if He were unwilling to have them revealed. And many things which were formerly concealed in His own knowledge He has made known to us, because He wishes man to take a profitable interest in the wealth of knowledge which he draws from the divine treasures. But as a guide toward this interest which we have just mentioned one should take special note of the words that Wisdom used concerning herself when she spoke in these terms:

“I am begotten of God’s own heart; I have proceeded from the mouth of the Highest; and I have ordered all things.* The spirit of God moved over empty space, and we separated light from darkness; we appointed hours and times, days and nights, years and winters and everlasting summer. We built a star-lit throne for the King of heaven; yea, God did nothing except in my far-seeing presence. Together we weighed the lightness of the air and the gravity of the earth; we hung the ponderous sphere of earth in the thin air and strengthened the firmament of heaven with mighty forces. We commanded the blazing sun to adorn the brow of day with shining beams; but the inconstant moon we bade illumine the darkness of night with its pale sheen. We created a comely man in our image. God also beautified the face of the earth with trees and herbs yielding manifold fruits; He called forth the beauties of the sky in the form of birds of many kinds; and he concealed multi-

* Cf. *Proverbs*, viii, 22 ff.; see also, among the “Apocrypha,” *Ecclesiasticus* (*The Wisdom of Jesus the son of Sirach*), xxiv, 5 ff.

tudes of fishes of many sorts in the depths of the waters. He also commanded the four-footed beasts to multiply upon earth into many and divers species. He girded the entire circle of the earth with a roaring ocean and briny streams. He commanded fresh waters to flow forth in steep cascades over the face of the land, and built the foundations of the earth with numerous passages, that the flowing waters might always be able to fulfil the duties assigned them; and He commanded the light vapors to carry heavy waters through the heights of the air by means of enticing warmth. Further He bade the wind-swollen clouds pour forth cool showers over the face of the earth. And the Maker of all things bade me oversee the whole artifice of the divine handiwork. Then I moved briskly with treading foot over the mountain top; I fared lightly over smooth vales and level fields; I strode with toilsome and heavy step over the rough billows; and I measured the width of the level ocean with gentle tread. Pressing forward with stiffened knee, I walked upon the wings of the stormy winds. With gentle speech I taught the silent calm its pleasing manner. I traced my path through the heights of heaven and the expanse of the air; I scanned the curved circle of the restless ocean; and I paced and measured the entire globe of the sphere-shaped earth. I traveled over hills and mountains; I ran over fields and meadows and level valleys; and I gave honey-like dew to all the blossoming herbs. I passed among thorns and bushes and through forests of every kind and gave sweet blossoms to the fruit-bearing trees. I pitched my tent in a shadowless beam of light and went forth from this fair shelter

arrayed like a bridegroom and glad like a mighty giant rejoicing in the race.* But mortal idols envied me, found me guilty, and condemned me to die. In wrath I descended to the lowest valleys and overturned the strongholds of the mighty ones in mine anger. With violence I shattered the metal gates of the strong castles and broke the firm iron pillars and the thick bars of iron. I took gold and gems and jewels, the plunder of warfare, and then journeyed gladly to the higher abodes with priceless booty. I traveled through farms and villages and parishes offering the poor a share in my wealth. I offered the husbandman fruitful corn and partnership with me. I comfort the sorrowing; I give rest to the weary, drink to the thirsty, and food to the hungry. Happy is he who drinks from my cup, for my beverage has an unfailing sweetness. I journey through castles and cities and marts; I run over houses, markets, and streets; I call with a clear and friendly voice, offering food, entertainment, and harmless amusement. Happy is he who goes to my table, for my meat has a more pleasing savour than the sweetest perfume; my drink is sweeter than honey and clearer than any wine; tuneful music is heard at my table in sweet and beautiful melody; there are songs and poems such as rarely are heard, merriment and gladness, and pure joy unmixed with grief. Happy is he who shall live in my house, for in my house are seven great pillars which join together the entire vault under a good roof; they stand upon a floor placed on immovable foundations and they fortify all the walls with great strength. In each of these pillars

* An echo of *Psalms*, xix, 5.

may be found the seven liberal arts of study. Furthermore, my house is strewn with fragrant grasses and lovely herbs; it is hung with beauty and elegance, and splendor in every form. Among the humble I am a pleasant companion, but toward the proud I am stern and haughty. In every school I am the principal teacher and I am the highest form of eloquence in every law court. I am the wisest among lawyers and the chief justice on every bench. Happy is he who is found to be a sincere companion of mine; for I am constantly with my companions guarding them from all perils. Happy is he who suffers no disgrace from me, for my wrath kindles a fire in its passion which burns even to the lowest depths; some day it will consume the foundations of the hills and swallow up the earth with its teeming life. Where can he hide who seeks to escape from me ? The spirit of God fills the entire home-circle and searches out the meaning and the interpretation of all knowledge."

The speech that you have now heard is one which Wisdom has spoken about herself; there are others like it, but loftier, which are not repeated here. For King Solomon and Jesus the son of Sirach have written with much skill a great many sermons of the kind that Wisdom has spoken about herself in divers ways. But if we were to mention all the speeches that can be found in their writings, our conversation would suffer a great delay; and it seems unnecessary at this time to bring into our talk any lengthy discussion of those things that Wisdom has said about herself. However, it is the duty of every king to know thoroughly all the accounts

that Wisdom has given of herself or wise men like those just mentioned have written, and each day to ponder some part of those speeches, if the duties of his office leave him any time for that.

LVII

DIFFICULT DUTIES OF THE KING'S JUDICIAL
OFFICE WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

Son. Since it clearly is the official duty of a king to be well informed in all science, it is quite evident that to acquire the knowledge which you have just now discussed must be of the highest importance; for it seems likely that he will be able to gather much insight from it, whether he wishes to meditate on the greatness of divine power or on the needs of men. Now since you do not care to discuss these matters further, I will ask you to continue your remarks with a few words about what a king ought to consider before passing judgments, when he comes into the judgment seat to determine the causes of men.

Father. It is indeed his duty, as you have remarked, to look carefully into all those speeches that we have now spoken and to study them thoroughly, for this reason, that if he unravels them with care in his thoughts, he will surely find in them, if he has understanding, nearly all those things which pertain to divine power and which show how God has distributed his gifts among men and other created beings. For every king and every other discreet man can learn in this way what he actually is, and what he ought to be, if he wishes to achieve what God has intended for him. You also ask how a king

should weigh the judgments that he renders in the disputes of men; but I have given a brief reply to that question in an earlier talk, when I told how God passed judgment after His covenant with Adam was broken, and what judges He brought with Him to the judgment seat. I also gave many examples to show how God ordered His verdicts in certain cases of a later time, those of King Pharaoh and all the others who were named later in that conversation; and every king ought surely to weigh what is found in those examples. He must also consider with care whether a case calls for severity and punishment or whether the doom should be tempered; for the judgments ought not to be equally severe in all cases. And every sentence should be kept within the bounds of justice and fairness; and here I may cite another example, if you like.

There is something told of a certain king, which I find most fitting to illustrate this point. This king was a man of fame and power, thoroughly learned in all knowledge and just in all his decisions. Every day there came before him a large number of men whose difficulties he had to settle; and every day he sat a long time on the judgment seat to determine the suits of his people, and with him sat the wise men, whom he had found to be the most discreet and best prepared for such duties. But whenever the king sat in this assembly with the wise men whom he had summoned to serve with him, armed knights stood about the house to make sure that he could sit in perfect security. The king had many sons, one of whom, however, was the dearest of all; for this son loved especially to be

near his father whenever possible, and he frequently sat on the judgment seat with him. It was in the king's nature to be slow in reaching decisions; and it was said among men of quick minds that he would surely be able to settle the law suits and speak his verdicts more promptly, if he were truly wise. This remark was approved by the king's son and by many others among the wise men; and so often was the saying repeated that the king himself got news of it. Now it happened at one time that the king was indisposed after a bleeding; and just then a number of men came to bring their disputes before the king. He then sent for his son, the one who was in the habit of sitting in judgment with him, and said to him: "Summon the wise men who are accustomed to sit in judgment with me and go into my judgment hall and take my seat for to-day, and determine as many of the law suits as you possibly can get over." It was done as the king commanded. And when the cases were presented to those men, it looked to them as if they could decide the suits in a hurry. But when the king's son was ready to determine the disputes which had been brought before him, he thought he saw three young men coming forward, handsome yet terrible in appearance. Two of them sat down at his feet, one on either side. One was occupied with a set of writings in which were written out all the cases that were to be settled that day, one case in each document. The other was busy with balances; and these appeared so delicate that, if a little hair was laid upon them, they would be disturbed. The one who had the balances held them up, while the other, who had the documents,

laid the writings which favored him who had brought the suit into one scale and the writing in his behalf who was to reply in the other; but it looked as if the scales would never balance. Then the king's son thought he saw that certain documents were brought out in which the decisions and formal verdicts were drawn up, just as he had intended to render judgment and all the wise men had advised. But even after these writings had been laid in the scales, they were as far from balancing as before. When the king's son saw these things, he looked to see what the third young man was doing, and saw that he stood near with a drawn sword as if ready to strike. The sword was keen-edged and terrible, and the edges looked to him as if they were both on fire. Then he saw clearly that, if he passed judgment before the scales balanced, the sword of the young man would immediately smite his neck. Just then he glanced down before his feet, and there he saw the earth open downwards; underneath he saw the gaping jaws of hell, as if waiting for him to come there. But when he saw these things, he ceased speaking and rendering judgments. When the wise men reminded him that there were suits to be settled, he called them to him, and everyone who came saw all these things that we have now described. After that none dared to pronounce judgment, for the scales of the young man never balanced, and no suit was settled on that day. But thereafter no man thought it strange if the king was slow in pronouncing his decisions.

Another and similar example is found in what I told you earlier in our conversation, when we spoke about

a city in Ireland called Themar; * and I shall repeat that story in part, if you wish. This was the leading city in Ireland and the king had his chief residence there; and no one knew of a finer city on earth. Though the inhabitants were heathen at that time and did not know the true faith about God, they were firm in the belief that there could be no deviation from righteousness in judgment on the part of the king who dwelt in Themar; for no decision was pronounced in Ireland which they could consider just before the king at Themar had passed upon it. Now at one time it came to pass that a case was brought before the king who sat in Themar in which his friends and kinsmen were interested on the one side, while men whom the king disliked had a part on the other side; and the king shaped the verdict more according to his own will than to justice. And this soon became evident, for three days later the royal hall and all the other houses that the king occupied were overturned, so that the foundations pointed upward, while the walls and the battlements pointed down into the earth; and the inhabitants immediately began to desert the city and it was never occupied after that. Now from these accounts you are to conclude that God permits such things to be revealed to men, because He wishes them to understand that such an outcome is daily prepared in a spiritual and invisible manner for men who refuse to render just and right judgments, if they are appointed to determine the suits of men.

* C. xi.

LVIII

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED

Son. These examples apply very well to such men as are avaricious or obstinate or both.

Father. You shall know of a truth, that wherever justice is sold for money or is stricken down by arrogance, divine revenge and punishment, physical or spiritual, will surely come; and an instance of this can be cited, if it is desired. There was a prominent citizen in Athens named Stephen; he was judge in all those cases that arose within the city; he was not known as an unjust man. Now it came to pass that Stephen departed this life, and two groups of angels came to meet him, the one wishing to support his cause, the other charging him with much and heavy guilt and wishing to lead him with them to death. But whereas a dispute arose between them and neither side would yield, one of the angels proposed that they should lead Stephen before the Judge and let the dispute be settled by His judgment. When they came into court, the accusing lawyers cried out saying that they had a grave charge against Stephen, namely, that he had taken a plot of ground from the church of Saint Lawrence by an unjust decree. But the judge said that the saint should decide that case, seeing that he was the one robbed. Now just as Saint Lawrence came up to hear how the suit was going forward, one of the angels said to Stephen: "Why do you not call the holy priest Justin, whom you honored so highly as to have a chapel built for him near your hall and whom you have served in many things? He

surely will be able to assist you somewhat in these your troubles.” * Justin came at the moment when the suit was being brought up before Saint Lawrence; and after the case had been stated, the saint asked why Stephen had plundered him and deprived his church of land. Stephen replied that he did not render that unjust decision purposely, but really thought it was a just decision. Then Saint Lawrence gripped Stephen in the side and pinched him very hard. But Justin interceded for him, begging the saint to show mercy in this cause, both because of his intercession and because Stephen did not know that he had given an unjust decision. While Saint Lawrence was pinching his side, Stephen had a feeling that even if he were to suffer torture for a similar space of time in hell, he would find it no more painful than the clutching of Saint Lawrence. But as soon as Justin interceded for Stephen, the saint released him and forgave the offence.†

When the prosecutors heard that this indictment had failed, they shouted even more loudly, saying that they had still greater charges against Stephen. So they set forth that a Roman whose name was Tarquin had come to Athens, and since he was an alien and had no kindred there, he thought that he might need help from Stephen in his important affairs, seeing that Stephen was judge and ruler over the whole city; and he gave Stephen a fine horse on condition that he was to have justice and equity. Then the Judge decreed that, if Stephen had

* According to the legend the priest Justin assisted at the funeral of St. Lawrence. *Heilagra Manna Sögur*, I, 430.

† A somewhat different version of this story is given in the *Legenda Aurea* of Jacques de Voragine, who quotes the “Miracles of the Virgin Mary.”

sold justice for money, he should follow that profit to destruction. But when Stephen was questioned whether this charge was true or not, he denied the accusation and declared that he could not remember ever having taken fee or gift for justice. Now since Stephen had denied the charge, it was ordered that Tarquin himself should be called to straighten the matter. When Tarquin came, he declared that this was not a true charge against Stephen; for he asserted that Stephen had never taken fees for justice so far as he knew. "But having come there a stranger," said Tarquin, "I thought that I might need the good will of such a man and gave him the horse on my own volition and not at his request." When the accusers heard that they would surely fail in this indictment too, they cried even more loudly, saying that they had a new charge against Stephen, much greater than either of the others. They asserted that he had arbitrarily and illegally saved three men from the death penalty, whom both law and equity and a just sentence would have condemned. When Stephen was asked whether he was guilty of this charge, he admitted that he had saved the men from death, but declared that he had always regretted having saved them by arbitrary and illegal means. Then the Judge decreed that, if he had rescued men from death by violence whom justice had condemned to die, he must suffer death for it, unless he would do penance where the offence was committed. Then the priest Justin asked Saint Lawrence to help in Stephen's defense, seeing that he had forgiven him the matter that he had against him and no indictment had been found true except the

one that was now being considered. So Lawrence and Justin went in haste to the queen and, falling at her feet, begged her to request this favor, that the verdict be modified so that Stephen might be allowed to do penance in the place where he had offended. When the queen interceded for Stephen, her request was granted. Thereupon he was brought back to Athens, and he arose at the moment when his body was to be carried to the grave. He lived three winters after that and did penance for his guilt according to the instruction of the bishop who was in charge of that city.

There are many such examples that could be brought up in this talk, if it were thought necessary; and you should now conclude from what I set forth in my last speech that the judgments passed here must be carefully scrutinized, and that it is very important for those who are appointed to be judges to make sure whether the decisions are properly stated and the findings correct. For you heard how precisely the decrees were weighed before the king's son, when the scales were held up before him but would never balance; and how he was threatened with death, if he should pronounce a different judgment from the one that would balance the scales. You also heard how God punished the king and the city of Themar, because the king had distorted a just decision. Though the people did not hold the true faith about God, He punished the deed nevertheless, because they believed that a wrong decision could never come from Themar. And in the last example you heard how Stephen was held to account for all the dooms that he had pronounced, and suffered a reprimand for having

taken a gift from a friend; and he was condemned to die for having saved men from death, though many would regard that as a good rather than an evil deed.

LIX

WHEN JUDGMENTS SHOULD BE SEVERE AND WHEN
THEY SHOULD BE MERCIFUL

Son. The more examples of this sort I hear, the more difficult seems the position of those who are appointed to judge. I will ask you, therefore, to indicate some test by which I can know when the judgments ought to be severe and when they should be more lenient.

Father. It is difficult to state that in definite terms: still, all causes that are brought before the men who have authority to judge will be decided in some way. But I believe that a purpose to judge as they think is right will do the most to keep them from falling into guilt before God. For Stephen was acquitted of the charge that he had caused the church of Saint Lawrence to forfeit land by the fact that he did not know that his decision was wrong; and yet he did not wholly escape punishment, though in some respects he was punished less than he would have been, if he had known that his verdict was wrong. Now there are four things which he who goes into the judgment hall must leave outside and never allow to come into the judgment seat with him or even inside the door. The first is avarice; the second, enmity; the third obstinacy; the fourth, friendship. For you heard that Stephen was ordered to disclose whether he had accepted a gift from Tarquin and

had promised to secure justice for him in return for the fee. And the judgment was, that if he had sold justice for money, he should follow the fee to destruction. You heard this, too, that he was condemned to die for having saved men from death by force and in defiance of law. You also heard in the earlier account how the king and the city of Themar perished because the king, being friendly to one side and very hostile to the other, had distorted a just decision. Now for such reasons those four things must be excluded, lest any one of them should cause a righteous doom to be distorted.

You have also asked when the sentence should be lenient and when severe, and that question can now be answered in a few words. Careful account should be taken of the circumstances of the man's case who is accused. If a charge is brought against one who is anxious to keep the peace but is driven to violence by the selfishness and arrogance of another, and, regretting his guilt, is anxious to atone for it, — if such are the circumstances, there should be lenient judgment in his case. Likewise, if a man breaks the law who is ignorant and does not know that he is transgressing, and would not have done the deed had he known it to be contrary to law, his case, too, calls for a lenient sentence. Even when the ugliest cases that are known among men, such as theft and robbery, come up, one should investigate how the crime came about. If a man is so hard bestead that he can get no food either by begging or buying and cannot get work, while hunger and his physical nature drive him beyond endurance, the judge should be lenient with him, even though he be taken in guilt;

and whenever necessity drives a man into crime and law-breaking, the judgment should be tempered.

However, if the accused are men who have been led into crime by insolence, ambition, avarice, or selfishness, the dooms ought to be severe, though justice and the law of the land must be observed in every instance. And in cases like those to which we have just referred the sentence should be as severe as the law permits; while in the cases mentioned earlier the law should be applied with due allowance for the difficulties that were at hand. If the distress that led to the trouble is considered great, the judgment should be tempered accordingly. But if a king or any ruler who is a judge and has power to punish, takes life as a punishment, he should always do it with great reluctance, in his heart lamenting the death and ill-fortune of the offender. He must take heed, however, lest he slay out of his own cruelty or in anger and hatred for the one who is to die. Let him slay him in just punishment and out of love for those who live after; because he believes that they will live in greater security and lead better lives after having seen the death and troubles of such a one; and because he intends that the fear and terror which the misfortunes of another have brought upon him shall guide those to rectitude and good morals, whom nature is unable to guide because of their excessive ambition or stupidity. A famous man, an upright and excellent emperor, once ordained respecting the decrees of kings, that if a king should become so angry with any one that he planned his death, and if his guilt were not so evident that he could with justice be condemned at once to an imme-

diate death, that man should be kept in the king's garth or in custody forty days before his case should be finally determined.* And it would be well if every king would observe this enactment, in order that he might frame his decisions with regard for reason and justice and not in sudden anger. If a man is convicted of an offence for which law and justice impose a fine but not death; the king, or the lord who governs the land, shall seize his wealth, not because he loves and covets the money, but because a just penalty and the laws of the land demand it. If all these things which we have now set forth are carefully observed, I believe that those who are appointed to be judges will suffer no great reproaches from God.

LX

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED

Son. It seems reasonable that a land, which is placed in charge of a ruler who attends carefully to these things, will be well governed; and the people ought to show proper appreciation of his government. Still with your permission I shall now ask about certain matters that interest me concerning rightful verdicts. You referred to an order given by an emperor as to punishments decreed by a king (which looks to me like good law), that

* This is probably an allusion to the edict of Theodosius II "which interposes a salutary interval of thirty days between the sentence and the execution." Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, III, 176; Mommsen and Meyer (editors), *Theodosiani Libri XVI*, I, part 2, 503 (viii, 40: 13). The edict was probably a part of the penance exacted from the Emperor after his massacre of the Thessalonians. See *Ambrosius Saga* in *Heilagra Manna Sögur*, I, 40.

a man who had incurred the king's wrath should be given a reprieve of forty days in the king's custody, lest a verdict be rendered too quickly in his case and in violent anger; and it seems to me that a king will need to possess much good nature, if he is to spare a man in his anger. But even so righteous and holy a man as Moses was could not control his wrath on that day, when he came in anger to the people of Israel; for I am told that his wrath rose to such violence that he dashed the two tables of stone, which he bore in his arms and upon which God Himself had written the ten commandments of His law with His own fingers, against a rock and broke them into fragments in his fury; and rushing at once to arms, he and the men who were with him slew many hundred persons that day.* I have also heard that David in sudden wrath ordered the man, who came from the battle in which Saul fell, bringing the tidings that Saul was dead, to be slain immediately; † and he did not order him to be kept for further inquiry.

Father. Remember what I called to your attention in an earlier remark, namely, that these laws are intended for men who do not fall into such evident transgressions that a rightful verdict can condemn them to immediate death. But when Moses came away from God, he knew God's wrath toward all the people of Israel, and consequently did a deed of kindness and not of hatred when by this chastisement he turned them from error and evil ways; just as I have told you that a king in punishing should be moved by kindness and not by hatred. For all penalties that are inflicted be-

* *Exodus*, xxxii.

† *II Samuel*, i.

cause of hatred are murder; while punishment inflicted for the sake of love and justice is a holy deed and not murder.

LXI

CONCERNING CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

Son. Now, if you permit, I wish to ask more fully about penalties; for few men, indeed, are able to comprehend how it can be a good, holy, and loving deed to take a man's life; wherefore I with many others on the outside should like to have you explain briefly how it can be a good and proper deed to slay men in righteous punishment; inasmuch as all gentle and peaceful persons have a great aversion to manslaughter, regarding it as evil and sinful.

Father. The subjects that we are now discussing are clearly illustrated in the case of Moses. Holy man as he was and meek and right-minded in every way, had he known that his act of punishment was sinful like any other slaughter, he would not have ordered it. But if he had been so zealous in his obstinate wrath that he had done this deed in anger rather than for the sake of justice, God's righteousness would surely have punished him with a severe chastisement and stern revenge for the great slaughter that he committed. For Moses commanded every man who took up arms with him to spare none, neither father nor brother nor other kinsmen, if they had been guilty of the deed that had called God's anger down upon them. Moses showed a threefold righteousness in this chastisement: for those who were with him in the slaughter sanctified their hands in the blood of those whom they slew, since in their deed they ren-

dered obedience to their leader and fulfilled the sacred laws. Those who survived regretted their sins and turned their hearts to penitence for having broken the law, while those who were slain were cleansed in their penance and in the pangs which they suffered when they died. And it was much better for them to suffer a brief pain in death than a long torture in hell. Of the same character are the penalties that kings impose; for a king cleanses himself in the blood of the unjust, if he slays them as a rightful punishment to fulfil the sacred laws. Moreover, there are many capable men who fear punishment alone, and would commit crimes if they were not in terror of the king's revenge. But one who is to suffer punishment will confess his sins and repent of his misdeeds; though if he did not see a sudden death prepared for him, he would show no repentance. He is, therefore, saved by his repentance and the pangs which he suffers in his death. And it is better for him to suffer a brief punishment here than endless agony and torture; for God never punishes the same sin twice. Consequently the king's punishment becomes a good and kind deed toward all those who are subject to him, for he would rather have the one who is to be punished suffer a brief pain here for his wickedness than to be lost forever, in the world to come. Through this kindness he also saves the righteous and peaceable from the avarice and the wickedness of the violent. We may, therefore, conclude that punishment is a good deed, if it is exacted according to a righteous verdict; for King Saul was deposed from his kingship because he failed to punish according to God's orders at the time when he invaded the kingdoms of Amalek and the Amorites.

LXII

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED

Son. Now I wish to ask you why David slew the man of whom we spoke earlier, him who brought the tidings that Saul had fallen, and whether he slew him justly or did it from sudden anger.

Father. When the man had told these tidings, David asked how he knew them. And he said that he had lifted up weapons against Saul at the king's own request. When David heard this, he spoke thus: "A wretched creature you are, who dared to lay hands on the Lord's anointed; and it is better for you to suffer a swift punishment here than to have this crime pursue you into everlasting hell." Thereupon David ordered him to be slain. But when he who had hoped to receive a joyous welcome and good gifts for his tidings, saw that death was to be his reward, he repented that he had falsely imputed this crime to himself and would gladly have withdrawn his words, if he had been permitted to do so. But David spoke thus: "Your own testimony condemns you and not I; for you have charged yourself with this murder of the Lord's anointed." We have other and similar instances in the case of the men who slew Ishbosheth, the son of Saul, hoping thereby to win David's friendship; and they fared to David with the news that they had slain his enemy who had planned to rise up against him and his kingship. But when David heard these tidings he answered in this wise; "Wretches you are for this deed, having slain your lord, though you

were Ishbosheth's own men; you have committed a vile and treacherous crime in laying hands upon your lord, and you have not acted as if you were my men and did this out of loyalty to me. Now it will be necessary for you to suffer a swift revenge and a prompt punishment, lest this deed draw you into everlasting torment." Then David ordered his men to cut off their hands and feet and afterwards to hang them beside a pool in a city called Hebron.*

LXIII

THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD ILLUSTRATED BY THE STORY
OF DAVID AND SAUL

Son. I will venture to ask one more question about those cases in which it seems to me that God has passed rather strange sentences. I am asking chiefly because I find it hard to understand what reason or circumstance can have caused the difference in these decrees which I now intend to bring up. You stated earlier in your speech that God deprived Saul of his kingdom because he was too lenient in cases of homicide, though a man will think that this was no great offence, as it is easy enough to slay multitudes if that be regarded a better deed than to let them live. Still, this leniency proved such a grievous fault that God said He regretted having chosen Saul king over his people, and immediately threatened — what He later carried out — that the kingship should never be transmitted to his descendants; and immediately, though Saul was still living, He

* *II Samuel*, iv.

appointed another to be king after his days. But after David had become king, he committed a crime which will scarcely seem less when reflected upon; for he committed adultery with the wife of Uriah his knight, a good and faithful man, and afterwards contrived his death, not as a just penalty but because he wanted his wife. But later, when Nathan the prophet pointed out the sin to David and he confessed, he was forgiven at once; indeed, it seemed as if his kingship was more stable after that time than before. Now I do not know which is the worse crime, to kill an innocent man and violate his wife, or to let the guilty have their lives. Many a man, who is ignorant as to the reason why, may indeed imagine that God loved David more than Saul, and that David's crime was counted less for that reason. But inasmuch as God always judges according to justice and without regard to persons, it would be sinful to hold wrong ideas about this; and it would be well if you could add a few words in explanation, unless you think that my questions are stupid. It may also be that great lords who are chosen to be judges will get a better insight into these things, if they are clearly expressed.

Father. This question is of such a character that it will demand an extended answer, if it is to be fully understood. But since it has been brought up, I shall be glad to answer it as far as I can and as briefly as I can. First it is necessary to recall what I said in an earlier speech when we talked about dooms, — when they should be severe and when lenient: I then brought out the fact that if a good and peace-loving man should

fall into sin and his deed should seem evil to him and he were anxious to do penance, then the judgment ought to be merciful in his case on account of human nature; for human nature is so frail that no one can be so careful as never to fall into sin. But some add to their offence by taking pride in it, and they are not careful to avoid falling into another sin. Now David was of all men the most adroit in the use of weapons in warfare and he was by nature quite severe in righteous chastisement; but he was a kind-hearted man, friendly toward everyone, and sympathetic toward all who suffered misfortunes. He was also trustworthy in every respect, honest and faithful in friendship and in all his promises, and so virtuous that he would allow nothing vicious about his person, — indeed his like was not found among all the people of Israel; for when God chose David to be king, He testified in these words, saying that He had found a man after His own heart. But human frailty caused him to fall in the matter that we mentioned earlier: he violated Uriah's wife. But after he had fallen into this transgression and when he was once more alone, he repented deeply, sighing and weeping. Inasmuch as the rules of the law would condemn this crime as a shameful reproach, if it were rumored among the people, David planned to keep the matter quiet, letting God see his repentance but keeping the people in ignorance of his offence, lest they should take his misdeed as an example and regard it as less serious to fall into sin and transgression if they knew of his guilt. So David sought to hide his guilt by a crafty design: for as soon as he learned that Bathsheba, Uriah's wife, was preg-

nant, he sent for Uriah, and hoping to avoid taking his life, he ordered him to lie with his wife so that the offspring might be known as his, while David would atone in secret for the sin of his whoredom and never afterward come near Uriah's wife. But when he found that Uriah happened to be unwilling to lie with his wife, he contrived to conceal his sin from men, though he increased it in the sight of God. Later, when Nathan the prophet charged David with all this guilt, he answered as if condemning himself, speaking these words: "So heavy and evil is my transgression that I am worthy of death because of this thing; a wretch am I to have set such an example before God's people, over whom He has appointed me ruler and judge; rather would I now suffer a speedy death than have this misdeed pursue me to hell. Now since I have set an evil example before the people of God by my sin, I am ready to suffer punishment according to the Lord's will as a warning to the people not to fall into such transgression." But when Truth and Justice saw David's penitence, they permitted Mercy to pass the judgment; for the prophet Nathan replied in this wise: "God sees your repentance, and He does not desire you to suffer death for your sin, but He will punish you with an endurable chastisement for this deed before you die." Now you must know that God did not forgive David's crime so completely as to excuse him from just punishment; for this was the first penalty that the king suffered from God: the child which he had begotten with Bathsheba was a man child and very lovely, wherefore David much desired that it might live; but it did not please God to let him enjoy the child

which he had begotten in such a sinful way. Nevertheless, David lay seven days upon the earth in the raiment of mourning, fasting and imploring God to let the child live. But God would not hear his prayer, and the child expired on the seventh day.* And this was the second punishment, that God refused to let David build him a temple; † God even called him a murderer, because he had deprived Uriah of life. But for the adultery which he had committed with Uriah's wife, he had to suffer this disgrace, that his son Absalom, in the sight of all the people, went in unto David's concubines and thus dishonored his father before all the people.‡

You have also asked which crime was the worse, that David caused Uriah to be slain without guilt and seduced his wife, or that Saul refused to kill so many people of Amalek; and you shall know of a truth that Saul's crime was the greater; for no offence is graver than to be disobedient toward one's superiors, as Saul was. And you may observe even at this day among cloister folk, that if a monk is disobedient toward his abbot, where an abbot rules the cloister, or toward the prior, where such a one controls, he is forthwith expelled from the holy order and from the monastery and is thenceforth regarded as a layman. Likewise, if a priest refuses to obey his superior the bishop, he is at once deprived of clerical honors, and the right to say mass is taken from him as well as all other official duties. In the same way, if a bishop, be he humble or powerful,

* The story of David's great sin concerning Bathsheba and Uriah and its consequences is told in *II Samuel*, xi-xii, but it is probable that the author's source is some Biblical paraphrase rather than the Vulgate itself.

† *I Chronicles*, xxii, 8.

‡ *II Samuel*, xvi, 21-22.

refuses to obey his superior, he is immediately shorn of his dignity and all his office; and after that he is regarded among learned men as any other layman unworthy of any distinction. And it ought to be even more evident that it could not prosper Saul to be disobedient to such a lord as God Himself, when he was ordered to invade Amalek and the land of the Amorites and to slay all that was living. God took His rod of punishment and placed it in Saul's hands, bidding him execute His wrath and spare nothing that was living; to burn fortified cities, farmsteads, clothing, and whatever else there was; to lay the entire land in ruins and thus cleanse it with sword and ax and fire. Saul, however, carried out the vengeance that he was charged with in another way, by destroying everything that was lacking in beauty or value; but whatever seemed to him to be beautiful, valuable, and worth possessing he spared, brought home to his country, and distributed among his men. But when Samuel came to Saul and showed him the wrath of God, Saul spoke as if excusing himself: "Praise be to God, for I have fulfilled His command: I invaded Amalek and visited the entire kingdom with fire and sword; but King Agag I have brought with me, wishing to honor God's command by slaying him here, if He wills that he die. Fat oxen and fine sheep I have brought hither to sacrifice such to God as are acceptable to Him; and the children of the chief men I have brought hither to be kept in bondage and distress, doing fitting service for ourselves."

Then Samuel replied: "How can God now accept that as a sacrifice which He has Himself cursed in His

anger? For God demands a blessed and not an accursed sacrifice; and you shall know of a surety that obedience is more pleasing to God than any sacrifice." Truth stood by and said: "What need is there to conceal the motive that induced Saul to neglect doing as God commanded him? Saul imagined himself so firmly established in his kingship that he could order these things more according to his own liking than to God's command; he showed excessive pride in failing to remember who had given him the power. And this is the reason why he took good horses, oxen, sheep, and much else of value, that he might satisfy the greed of his knights and the rapacity of his other warriors rather than carry out the commands of God. And he spoke falsely when he said that he had brought horses and sheep and other things of value into his kingdom to sacrifice them to God; for he knew that a cursed sacrifice was not acceptable to God." Then the decision was left to Justice and she decreed in this wise: "Whereas God took His rod of punishment, and placing it in Saul's hands bade him execute the divine wrath upon a cursed people, let that punishment now come upon Saul and his family which he failed to visit upon those whom God had commanded him to carry it out upon. But the same rod of punishment that was given to Saul to shake over others, another shall now hold and shake over Saul and all his kin. And because he wished in his avarice to possess the riches that were forbidden him, let him now forfeit those riches that were given to him before." * But the reason why Justice passed such a severe judgment upon

* On this episode see *I Samuel*, xv.

Saul was that God knew his disposition thoroughly. For it was in Saul's nature to be proud and stubborn in the face of God; and as soon as he thought himself firmly established in his kingdom, he became greedy and avaricious, as is evident from this account.

Now there was this difference between the tempers of David and Saul: when Nathan the prophet charged David with sin, he spoke reproachfully of his fault, almost as if condemning himself, and implored mercy, though willing to suffer punishment, as if prepared to accept with gratitude any terms which God might impose for his misdeed; therefore he won favor through the lenient judgment of Mercy. Yet, his son died because of Uriah's death, though David himself did not die; and for violating Uriah's wife he suffered a great disgrace in that his son dishonored him in the sight of all the people.

But when Samuel accused Saul of his crime, he replied as if defending his cause and praised himself for having done so well and spoke in this wise: "Praise be to God, for I have done what He commanded;" though he knew in his own mind that anything else was nearer the truth. Therefore he was stricken by the sentence of Justice, God seeing his arrogant boasting and lying excuses. But his arrogance and envy became even more evident after he discovered that God was angry with him; for Saul fell ill; and now and then madness came upon him, so that he had to be watched when the malady troubled him. Then it was learned that if a man could be found who could play the harp well before him, he would find relief and the illness would

afflict him less. So they found a lovely youth whose name was David, the son of Jesse in Bethlehem, who knew how to strike the harp skilfully; he came to the king, and whenever the malady came upon Saul, David, standing before him, struck the harp and the illness departed immediately. But when Saul discovered that the malady was less severe, he loved David highly and made him his shield bearer.* Samuel, however, had already anointed him king in secret, no one knowing it but his father and his brothers. David remained with Saul many days and served him faithfully; and all men perceived that God was with him in all his doings. Saul, too, was well disposed toward him at first: he gave him his daughter and assigned him a troop to command.† But after Saul had won his great victory over the Philistines and David had slain the giant Goliath and they were returning from the warfare, women came forth from cities and fortresses, dancing toward them and singing praises to them for their victory. And the burden of their song was this, that Saul had conquered a thousand but David ten thousand.‡ When Saul heard this he was seized with wrath and envy toward David and said in his own thoughts: "Now I perceive that God has chosen this man to take the kingdom after me instead of my sons; but I shall try to upset this plan if I can, though so cleverly that no one shall perceive that I kill him intentionally." A few days later Saul's habitual illness came upon him; but David took his harp and, standing before him, played as was his wont to relieve the king's illness. Saul had a javelin in his hand which

* *I Samuel*, xvi, 14-23.

† *Ibid.*, xviii, 12-21.

‡ *Ibid.*, xviii, 6-9.

he threw at David, aiming to drive it through him and pin him to the wall of the room. Thus he had planned to avoid responsibility for the murder by leading the people to think he had done it in frenzy and not with evil intent. David escaped and found security from that peril. But when Saul saw that David had escaped and he had not caught him, he sent him on frequent forays among heathen people in the hope that he would be slain in warfare. But the more frequently David went out into battle, the more frequent victories and the greater honors did he win; and God magnified him before the eyes of all the people. And the more Saul saw him prosper, the more he envied him.*

Now you can imagine the state of King Saul's mind: he could say nothing against David, only what was good. But since he perceived that God loved David much because of his humility and loyalty, he envied him as Cain envied his brother Abel because God loved him. Indeed, Saul's enmity toward David became so evident that he could not conceal his intentions to kill him. Then Jonathan, Saul's son, reminded the king that it would be a sin to slay an innocent man, speaking in this wise: "My lord, why are you angry with your servant David? If there is any guilt on his part that may be injurious to your kingdom or dignity, every man who is with you here will seek his life; and we can seize him whenever we like, for he is not on his guard against us, knowing himself to be guiltless. He has served you long and has been faithful in all things; he fought against great odds when he slew Goliath, and

* Cf. *I Samuel*, xix, 8-11.

God rescued your entire kingdom through David's wonderful victory, which he won fighting unarmed against a giant. He has waited upon you in your distressing illness; and wherever you have placed him at the head of the host, he has brought a vigorous defense to your kingdom, and no one knows that he has been anything but loyal. Therefore conquer your wrath, sire, and do not fall into such an evident sin of murder before God as to slay an innocent man." * Saul, however, became only the more wrathful and charged with treason his son and everyone else who spoke a good word for David.

David fled from King Saul's wrath with a few men, but provided with neither clothes nor weapons. He came to the city called Nob, the bishop of which was Ahimelech, a son of Ahitub the bishop; but Ahitub was the son of Ichabod, the son of Phineas, the son of Eli the bishop. When David came to the bishop Ahimelech, he pretended to be traveling on an important mission for King Saul, and asked him to give him and his men something to eat and to furnish him with weapons. The bishop Ahimelech gave him such victuals as he had, but weapons he had none to give him except the sword that had belonged to Goliath; and this he gave him, for he did not know that he was a fugitive, but believed he was traveling on the king's errand, as he had said. But so fierce was Saul's hatred toward David, that as soon as he learned that the bishop Ahimelech had given him food, he seized the bishop and all his kinsmen and charged them with treason. The bishop replied to the

* Cf. *I Samuel*, xix, 4-7.

charge in this wise: "My lord, I confess that I gave David what food I had and the weapon that I had, for he said he was traveling on an important errand on your behalf. Why should I not give hospitality to a man like David, who is the best and the most highly esteemed of all the men that you have about you except your sons, and who is furthermore your own son-in-law and has been faithful to you in all things? Never have I had any design against you or your honor. Do not think, my lord, that I, your servant, have plotted with David against your will; I could not know why David traveled in such distress, for he told me that you had sent him with important errands; nor did I know that he had fallen into any guilt against you." Then Saul replied in fierce anger: "This I swear that you shall perish to-day, you and all your kin." Thereupon he caused the bishop to be slain along with eighty-five other men, all of whom were robed in the priestly dignity. After that he ordered all who dwelt in the city of Nob to be slain, even women and children, and had the city burned.*

Now I have revealed to you the ferocity which God found in Saul's heart when he removed him from the kingship, and which later became evident in what you have now heard and in much else of like import, though I have told this only. The displeasure which the king incurred from God fell so heavily upon him, for the reason that God saw in his heart the fierce avarice which later began to appear. Now he wanted to kill David,

* On the fate of Ahimelech and the inhabitants of Nob, cf. *I Samuel*, xxi, 1-9; xxii, 9-19.

though innocent, because he found that God loved him; and he slew the bishop, though guiltless, and so fierce was he that he slew everything in the city that had life and afterward burned the city. But where God had commanded him to use severity of this sort, there he had spared; here, however, he slew God's servants in defiance of God's command. But in David's case God passed a more lenient judgment for the reason that, just as he perceived the ferocity in Saul's heart, he found true repentance and clemency in David's heart, as I shall now show you.

There was a son of the bishop Ahimelech, Abiathar by name, who was hid in a cave when all those were slain of whom I have just spoken. Abiathar fled to David and told him all these happenings. But when David heard these tidings, he sighed and spoke thus in deep sorrow: "May God in His mercy forgive me for this slaughter, for I have too great a share in it, having eaten your father's bread. And now since you have come hither, abide with me; and if God permits me to live, He will also protect you with me, and let whatever God wishes happen to us both." Thereupon David elevated him to the bishop's office which his father had held. But when David's kinsmen learned that he was abiding in the forest, they joined him with a large force counting not fewer than four hundred men; and from that time on David grew in strength as God willed.* He camped among the hills with this force and made repeated attacks on Saul's enemies, but never on the king himself or his men. But whenever Saul learned

* *I Samuel*, xxii, 1-2, 20-23.

where David lay concealed, he marched out to seek him, intending to slay him.

Then it happened once, when David and his men were hiding in a large cave, that Saul entered this alone on a necessary errand. Then said David's companions: "Now God has fulfilled what He has promised you and has delivered your enemy into your hands; be sure to secure this quarry." David stole up and cut a piece off Saul's mantle, though the king was not aware of it, and returned to his comrades. Then David's companions said to him: "If you are unwilling to lay your own hand upon him, let us kill him." David replied: "My crime would be as great before God, whether I do it myself or bid others do it. God keep me and all our companions from such a sin as to lay hands upon the Lord's anointed. He is my master and I served him long; he is also the Lord's anointed and it would be a great crime, if I were to lay hands upon him, for I have no revenge to take either for father or brother or any other kinsman; nor is it as if he had taken the throne which he sits upon from my kinsmen with violence or deceit; but God chose him to it and sanctified him to His service, honoring him with His own name. Wherefore it is right that He Who appointed him to the kingship should deprive him of it according to His will, but not I in vengeful audacity. And I swear this day that God alone shall call him, whether by demanding his soul or by causing him to fall in battle before his enemies; but as for my hands, they shall let him live many days. But I regret deeply that I injured his garment if he shall feel hurt or dishonored because of it."

When Saul had departed and returned to his host, David ran up on a hill and cried: "My lord, King Saul! can you hear?" But when Saul turned to hear what this man said, David bent both knees to the earth and bowing before the king said to him: "Those men do ill who tell you, my lord, that I mean to be your enemy; for now I have evidence here in my hand that your life was in my power to-day, when you left all your host and entered the cave alone; and it was no less in my power to injure your life than your clothes, for here I have in my hand a large piece of the skirt of your mantle. Now let God judge between us. You see how they have told lying tales, who say that I have striven after your life." Saul appreciated these facts fully, for David spoke the truth; and he promised that he would nevermore hate David.* But not many days passed before Saul went out again to seek David, as he did constantly after that. Now it came to pass another time, when Saul had made a wearisome journey in search of David, that sleep came upon the king and all his host. And David went into the camp where Saul lay, but none was aware of it. The man who accompanied him was named Abishai and he said to David: "Now you can see that God surely intends to deliver your enemy into your hands, and it is not advisable to refuse what God Himself offers you. I will thrust my spear through him, if you will permit me, and then we shall return to our men." David answered: "God has done this to tempt me and to see whether I would lay my hands on His anointed. Now I must answer as before, that God shall tear the kingship

* The story of David and Saul at En-gedi is told in *I Samuel*, xxiv.

from him, either by demanding his soul or by causing him to fall before his enemies; but as for my hands, they shall let him live many days; for I have no revenge to cherish against him, either for plunder or for the loss of kinsmen, except such as was incurred while he was cleansing the land with righteous punishment; and it is neither my proper business nor that of anyone else to take revenge for such; for it is a more serious matter than even a wise man can conceive to lay hands on the Lord's anointed, who is dedicated and hallowed to God. Let us take his saddle-cup and his spear for a proof, and then let us return to our forces." *

Now you will understand the character of both King Saul and David from what I have just told you. David knew that he was chosen of God to govern, that he was the Lord's anointed, consecrated and hallowed to God no less than Saul was. He also knew that God had rejected Saul. And God delivered Saul into David's hands, so that he could have taken Saul's life at any time, if he had wished. David showed great faithfulness and humility in this, that every time he saw Saul, he bowed before him and saluted him as any other unhallowed layman would, who had not been set apart for chieftainship. Although Saul lay in wait for his life, David continued to serve him, and worried the king's enemies as much as he could. On the other hand, Saul had nothing against David except that he knew God had chosen him to be king; and he showed great wickedness and fierce hatred in striving to slay an innocent man, one who served him faithfully. He likewise displayed an

* Cf. *I Samuel*, xxvi.

inordinate vanity in wishing to make away with a man whom God Himself had chosen to rule after him. For these reasons God passed a severe judgment in Saul's case; for He saw in Saul's heart what men could not perceive, though subsequently God made this fact evident to the sight of men. But in David's case God was more lenient, for the reason that He found him always humble and faithful in everything, as He made clear to men later on. There is further evidence of this in the fact, that as soon as David learned that Saul and his son Jonathan had fallen, he and all his host lamented in great sorrow, and David spoke these words: "Be ye cursed, ye mountains of Gilboa! May God nevermore send rain or dew or growing grass upon you, for you led King Saul and his son Jonathan along treacherous paths in their flight across your summits and refused to show them serviceable highways, whereby they could save their lives from the hands of the foeman; nor did you provide them with sheltering ramparts upon your heights. It is a bitter sorrow for all the people of Israel, that splendid chieftains like Saul and Jonathan should pass away from council and government. Great strength and power have perished this day, when such excellent princes are fallen as Saul and Jonathan were, and the many good knights with many good weapons and much good armor who have perished with them. Let the lesser men beware of God's wrath, since He has allowed the heathen to lay hands on His anointed. Let the multitude bewail a loss like this, that such excellent rulers should fall before the heathen." * Such words and many

* Cf. David's lament in *II Samuel*, i: 17-27. The author has made but slight use of David's own language.

more like them David spoke that day, and thus he lamented their death rather than rejoiced in the fact that the realm had fallen to him and into his keeping. From this you will observe how upright he was, how honest and free from faults. But whenever human nature caused him to fall into sin, he forthwith showed keen repentance, imploring God's mercy and compassion; and God gave heed at once to his honest regret.

Earlier in our conversation we have told how Absalom, King David's son, raised the whole land in revolt against his father. But when David's captains happened to meet Absalom in battle and David learned of his death, he cried out in these words: "What shall it profit me to live, an aged man who grows weaker day by day, now that you, my son Absalom, are dead in the flowertime of youth? Would to God that I could die now and that you my son might live!"* David was never so bitter against other men but that he would rather suffer death himself than see another's death, except where he saw that punishment was inflicted on the demand of justice. This was shown again at one time when David's entire kingdom incurred the wrath of God, and a pestilence came upon the realm, so violent that people perished by thousands. When the plague approached the city of Jerusalem, David beheld the angel, who was smiting the people, standing between heaven and earth with a blazing sword. And when he saw the angel with the sword lifted as if ready to strike, he placed his neck under the edge and said: "I beg thee, O Lord, that this sword be rather turned against

* Cf. *II Samuel*, xviii, 33.

my neck than that more of God's people shall now be slain, and that my Lord's wrath may fall upon me, who am guilty and worthy of punishment, and upon my family rather than that God's people shall be rooted out on my account." As soon as God saw David's regret and heard his very acceptable prayer, He commanded the angel to desist from slaying the people, and forthwith the plague ceased everywhere in the kingdom.*

From these and many other similar instances you will now observe how full of grace and goodness David was toward all men. And just as God saw kindness, mercy, and humility in his heart, He saw avarice, ferocity, and unmeasured pride in Saul's heart; consequently every fault was graver before God in Saul's case than in David's; for the men were unlike. David was the meekest and the most merciful of men, and whenever he fell into any fault he implored God to spare him; but Saul grew fiercer and more envious the more sins he fell into and the nearer he saw God's wrath approaching. Now if you think that these answers have led you to a clearer understanding of the matters that you have asked about, I believe it will not be necessary to discuss these subjects any further.

LXIV

ILLUSTRATIONS FROM THE JUDGMENTS OF SOLOMON

Son. I see clearly now from what you told in your last speech that the judgments were lenient in David's case, because he regretted the sins into which he fell,

* Cf. *II Samuel*, xxiv.

but more severe in Saul's case, because he was less disposed to do penance for his misdeeds. Now there are certain other matters which I am much interested in and which I shall ask about with your permission, namely those events that occurred after David's death. Once when two women came before King Solomon, quarreling about a child, the king ordered the child to be hewn in pieces and half given to each of them: * now I wish to ask whether, if neither of the women had spoken up, the king would have hewn the child asunder or not.

Father. The king ordered the child to be divided because he knew of a surety that the one who was the mother would not be willing to have the child divided.

Son. I asked whether the king would have divided the child if the mother had kept silence.

Father. If the mother had been so void of mercy that she would not ask him to spare the child, the king would have divided it between them.

Son. Would it not look to you like plain murder, if he had slain an innocent child, seeing that it was not for punishment ?

Father. It would indeed have been murder if he had killed the child; still, the guilt would not have been with the king but with the mother, if she had failed to beg mercy for her child, when she heard the king render a fair judgment in their case, which she realized would mean the child's death; therefore the guilt would be hers if she withheld the motherly pity which could save the child.

* See *I Kings*, iii, 16-28.

Son. What do you think about the death of Joab and Adonijah, whom King Solomon slew ? Was that a righteous judgment or not ? And why did King Solomon cause Shimei to be slain for cursing his father David, seeing that David had already forgiven Shimei this offence ?

Father. If King Solomon had done this except as lawful punishment, God would have visited him with a worthy penalty as for murder. But after he had done all this, God revealed Himself to him in a dream and bade him choose whatever gift he might wish. But Solomon asked God to give him wisdom and insight into righteous judgments. Then God answered him in this wise: " If this choice were given to the multitude, there would be many who would choose riches and power, or a long life, or peace, or success in warfare. But because thou hast chosen this thing, thou shalt receive what thou hast chosen and likewise all the other gifts that I have enumerated." From this you will observe how well God is pleased with righteousness in judgments; for God gave Solomon all the supreme gifts, because he chose equity as his part. And you will understand that, if he had slain those others unjustly, God would not have given him such excellent gifts as He did give him.

LXV

SOLOMON'S DECISION IN THE CASE OF SHIMEI

Son. What you have just said does indeed seem reasonable. If Solomon had been led to execute these men through selfishness and injustice, he would not have received such excellent gifts from God, as were given

to him after that deed was done. Still, if I may, I should like to ask you to point out how righteous dooms are worked out, in order that I may understand more clearly, and others too who may hear it, how Solomon could execute Shimei by righteous decree, when his father David had already forgiven him the offence.*

Father. Solomon did this out of regard for justice rather than from cruelty, and for the following reasons. When Shimei cursed David, he did it out of impudence and malice, and for no just cause; but when he begged David for mercy, he asked it more because of fear than of repentance, for he was afraid that David would take his life as the sacred law demanded. But when he implored mercy David replied in these words: "I shall not slay you this time, since you implore my grace; but keep in mind that you will be punished for this deed, unless you atone in true repentance." In these words David pointed out to Shimei that he ought to atone with loving friendship for the words that he had spoken in sheer hatred. Shimei, however, lived the rest of his days in such a manner that, while no one found him to cherish enmity toward David, it never appeared that he made returns in friendship for David's mercy in permitting him to live when the law demanded his death. But when he came before Solomon after David's death, the king said to him: "Remember, Shimei, that you cursed the Lord's anointed; and it has not appeared that you have truly regretted it since. But this shall be a covenant between us as a reminder to repentance on

* The story of Shimei is told in *II Samuel*, xvi, 5-8; xix, 16-23; *I Kings*, ii, 8-9, 36-46.

your part, that you shall not enjoy such complete freedom as one who has never fallen into this sin. Now you have large and beautiful dwellings and many houses here in Jerusalem and you may live in peace within the city, enjoying all your possessions according to your desire; but if you ever go outside the city, the punishment of the law shall come upon your head, since you did not take thought to repent before I reminded you."

When the king had ceased speaking, Shimei expressed himself as thankful for this agreement and said that he should find but little inconvenience in being forbidden to leave the city, if he might remain secure in the king's friendship within the city and enjoy all his possessions. Three years later, however, Shimei forgot this agreement and went outside the city to seek diversion,* as if proud of his audacity in violating the covenant. But as soon as these tidings were told to the king, he ordered Shimei to be seized and brought before him, and he said to him: "You have forgotten to be ashamed of having broken the agreement which we two made as a reminder that you owe repentance for having cursed the Lord's anointed. There is, therefore, a double guilt upon your head now; and it will be better for you to suffer a brief punishment here, so that others may be warned by your misfortune, than that this crime should follow you into eternal death, and others become bolder in such evil, if you die unpunished. Then the king ordered him to be killed and buried outside the city as a reminder and warning to others never to break a covenant.

* According to the Scriptural story Shimei left Jerusalem to bring back two runaway servants. *I Kings*, ii, 39-40.

LXVI

SOLOMON'S JUDGMENT IN THE CASE OF ADONIJAH
AND HIS FOLLOWERS

Son. Now I wish to ask you why Solomon caused his brother Adonijah to be put to death for requesting Abishag to be his wife.

Father. Adonijah had earlier, as you may have heard, led an uprising against his father. When David had become an aged man and was very decrepit because of his many years, Adonijah appointed himself to be king without his father's knowledge, and made a festive banquet as newly consecrated king. He sent heralds running through the streets with pipes and drums to proclaim throughout the city that Adonijah was now the king. The chief men who were with him in this plot were Joab, David's chief captain and his kinsman, and Abiathar the bishop, and many other lords. But when Zadoc the bishop, Nathan the prophet, Benaiah the captain, and Bathsheba the queen came as if in deep sorrow to tell David what great undertakings were hidden from him, he remained silent for some time but sighed heavily. At last he spoke as from a heart full of grief and said: "My sons are not minded like me, for I served King Saul many days, though he sought after my life. And yet God had chosen me to be king, for He was angry with King Saul; but I awaited the judgment of God by which he would be deprived of his kingdom; but I would not condemn him, though he was mine adversary. Now my son has done that to me which I would not do to mine enemy. But because

Adonijah has taken the kingship to which God Himself appointed me, even before I had renounced it or He Who had chosen me had removed me, he shall fall in disgrace from this dignity, as that one fell who in arrogant pride raised the first rebellion against his Lord."

Then David said to Zadoc the bishop: "Take my mule and harness him with all the accoutrements with which he was arrayed when I rode him in all my glory and set my son Solomon upon him; and taking Nathan the prophet with you and Benaiah the captain and all my most loyal chiefs and knights, ride to the tabernacle of the Lord in Zion * and there anoint my son Solomon king. Then take my own trumpet and let it be sounded throughout the city with a festive sound to proclaim that Solomon is king by the will of God and David's choice. After that you shall bring my son Solomon to me that I may welcome the newly appointed king to my throne." When David had ceased speaking, Zadoc the bishop did all those things that the king had commanded. And when Solomon returned arrayed in all the tokens of royalty, David rose to receive him, bowed before him, and blessed him in these words: "Praise be to Thee, O God, that Thou wert pleased to exalt me from my low estate to such high honors as I now enjoy, and hast helped me in many perils, and now after much trouble and long toil hast brought me the consolation that mine eyes should behold the one sprung from my loins whom Thou hast Thyself chosen to sit in the seat of honor to which Thou didst formerly appoint me, ac-

* Error for Gihon.

cording to Thy promises, O Lord. Now I pray Thee, O Lord, give this young man David's glory and understanding in double and threefold measure, make him a perfect ruler to govern Thy holy people according to Thy will." Then David kissed Solomon and said to him: "The God Who rules the heavens multiply peace to you above all the kings upon earth and give you blessings and the fruits of earth and perfect happiness." * When he had ended this speech and benediction, David said to Solomon: "Because I find that God has given you wisdom and understanding, I charge you to govern wisely and justly, though somewhat severely, lest the kingdom should seem to be lacking in government because of your faint-heartedness. But temper the severity of punishment, lest you be thought too stern and merciless. Remember your kinsman Joab, however, who has served me long and with much labor; but it is not fitting that the sinful deeds which he has committed should follow him to hell: for he slew two excellent captains who were in my peace, Abner and Amasa, who had served King Saul with great fidelity. And there are many others whom he slew in his overweening pride, but not in lawful chastisement. And it is better to let him suffer a brief punishment here than that he should be lost eternally because of these crimes. Keep also my promise to Shimei, though he cursed me when I fled from the violence of your brother Absalom; but keep it in such a way that he will be reminded to do penance

* On the subject of Adonijah's rebellion and Solomon's triumphant accession see *I Kings*, i. The author has used little more than the outline of the story as given in the Bible.

for his misdeeds, lest the curse be forever upon his head which he incurred when he cursed me an innocent man. Let kinship temper your wrath against your brother Adonijah, if you see that he regrets his treasonable uprising against his father. Remember that the bishop Abiathar lost his father and all his kinsmen, because he gave me food, when I came to Nob a fugitive from the face of King Saul. Abiathar deserves well for this, too, that he followed me and bore the ark of God before me, when I fled from the face of your brother Absalom. But do not forget to give him a reminder to repentance for joining your brother Adonijah in treasonable designs against me, lest this offence should follow him to his death. Be manly, strong, and severe, but with moderation. Do the will of God in all things, and both temporal and eternal joys shall be added to you." *

Then said David to Zadoc the bishop and Nathan the prophet: "Go now and prepare a banquet and lead King Solomon into my hall and let him sit in my high-seat amid festive joys." And they did everything as David bade them. But when Adonijah's feast was ended, the guests heard singing and piping and all forms of merriment, as if a new joy had come into the city. When Adonijah asked what the merry-making signified, whether the rejoicing was in his honor or new tidings had come, it was told him that David had himself given Solomon his title and all the royal honors and had chosen him to be king; and that Solomon was already hallowed as king and sitting upon David's throne

* Cf. *I Kings*, ii, 1-11. In the Biblical story David's charge to Solomon comes after the day of Solomon's accession, and not, as the author has it, during the day.

in festive raiment; and that all the people rejoiced in the news as on a merry holiday. When Adonijah heard this report, great terror came upon him and all those who were with him in this conspiracy, and they fled every man to his house. But Adonijah fled to the tabernacle of the Lord and laid his hand upon the sacred altar, as if taking vows of chastity and service in God's holy tabernacle. Thereupon he sent a man to the king, saying: "Here shall I die, unless my lord King Solomon will promise and assure me that he will not slay me, his servant, for the evil that I have done." Then King Solomon replied: "Adonijah is my brother by kinship; therefore I will gladly spare him, if he will show true repentance for stirring up treason and rebellion against his father David; and I will bear this burden with him before God on the condition that he must always continue loyal, humble, and free from deceit. But if any treasonable ambitions be found in him, he may expect a swift revenge to come upon his head. Let him now go home to his possessions and enjoy them as long as he keeps what is now decreed." *

When the hour of David's death was approaching, Solomon frequently visited his father; and when the king had departed this life, he mourned for him many days, he and all the lords in the kingdom; and he buried him with every form of royal pomp and at a vast outlay. But after David's death, Adonijah begged Bathsheba the queen to ask King Solomon to give him Abishag to wife. The facts respecting Abishag were these: when King David grew old, chills entered into

* Cf. *I Kings*, i, 41-53.

his flesh, so that clothes were not sufficient to keep him warm; Abishag was a young virgin, the fairest maid in the kingdom and of the best and noblest family; she was brought to King David's bed to lie close to him and warm him and cherish him, in the hope that the king might draw warmth from her soft and blossoming form and from his desire for the fair virgin. David loved her highly with a perfect affection, but as a foster-mother, not as a wife. And for this reason Abishag won such great honor that she came to be regarded as the first queen and she ranked above all the other queens in the eyes of the people; and thus her dignity was sanctified by David's embraces. But Adonijah had a purpose in seeking this marriage after David's decease, for he hoped in this way to obtain the kingship by deceitful intrigue; inasmuch as all the people would say, if he married Abishag, that he was most worthy to sit on David's throne who was most worthy to mount his bed and lie in the arms which David had hallowed with his very self. He also presumed, as seemed reasonable, that the brothers and all the kinsmen of Abishag would rather have him as king, if she were his, than a man who was not bound to them in this way. Queen Bathsheba undertook Adonijah's errand and afterwards went to seek an interview with her son King Solomon. As soon as she had entered the royal hall, the king rose to meet his mother and led her to a seat at his side. Then the queen revealed her errand, speaking thus: "I have a little favor to ask of you, but I will not reveal the request before you promise to grant it." The king replied: "You are my mother, and I cannot refuse what you wish to

ask; and I surely intend that you shall have what you have come to ask for. But it surely behooves you to keep in mind that you should ask only for what I may freely grant." Then said Bathsheba the queen to the king: "I have come to ask you to give your brother Adonijah Abishag to wife."

Then King Solomon replied in great wrath: "What is at the bottom of this request that Abishag be given to Adonijah? If you prefer that he should have the kingship rather than I, then ask the kingdom for him; for you know that my brother Adonijah is older than I and once assumed the royal title, being chosen by the chief lords before my father had appointed me to be ruler in obedience to the will of God. Joab the most powerful of the lords and captains and Abiathar the bishop have evidently continued plotting with him even to this day. Abishag is of the noblest kinship in the city and the whole realm; furthermore, she is honored by all as the first queen because of the care that she gave my father in his old age. If she is given to Adonijah to be his wife, the people will regard him as most worthy to sit in David's seat, since he is thought worthy to lie in the bed and in the arms in which David himself lay. Now when Adonijah had committed treason against his father, I offered to share the responsibility for his sin before God because of our kinship. But now he has repeated and trebled the treason against me, his brother, which he first committed against his father. Therefore I swear by the God Who has placed me on David's throne that Adonijah shall suffer for his guilt, as shall every one of the others who are with him in this traitor-

ous project." Then King Solomon said to Benaiah the captain: "Go and slay my brother Adonijah, for I would rather have him suffer a swift penalty here, such as the rules of the holy law provide for treason against one's lord, than to have him carry a traitor's guilt to hell. Slay also Joab my kinsman, for twice he committed vile offences against King David, when he slew Abner and Amasa, two renowned captains, though they were in David's peace and protection. But his third and greatest crime is this, that he was traitor to David when he gave Adonijah the royal title; surely he will be lost forever in the world to come, unless he shall do penance in this world by suffering a lawful punishment." *

In this case King Solomon gives clear proof that it is quite permissible to break vows and promises, if what has been asked or granted is contrary to what is right. He granted what his mother Bathsheba the queen had come to request before he knew what it was; but as soon as he was aware that the prayer was a perilous one, he slew the man who had originally made the request. Benaiah did as King Solomon commanded and slew Adonijah. But just as Joab the captain and Abiathar the bishop had shared in the plans to give Adonijah the royal title, they also had a share in his plan to ask for Abishag to wife; and when they heard of Adonijah's death, they foresaw their own destruction. Benaiah seized Abiathar the bishop and led him before King Solomon; but Joab fled to God's tabernacle and laid his hand upon the sacred horn of the altar, as if taking vows of chastity and service in God's holy tabernacle. Benaiah

* Cf. *I Kings*, ii, 13 ff.

came to God's sanctuary and said: "Come forth, Joab, the king commands you to come forth out of God's tabernacle." But Joab replied: "I have come hither into God's protection, and I will suffer death here, if I cannot remain in security." Then Benaiah reported his answer to the king through his messenger; and when the messenger came before the king bringing the bishop Abiathar and related all these things, King Solomon said to him: "Give my command to Benaiah to slay Joab wherever he be found, for his deeds and the decrees of the sacred law slay him and not we." Benaiah did as King Solomon commanded and slew Joab where he then stood.*

But the king spoke in this wise to the bishop Abiathar: "You know that you have deserved death according to the rules of the holy law; but whereas you lost your father and all your kinsmen in Nob in a single day, because your father had given my father David food, and whereas you also bore the ark of God before my father when he fled before the face of my brother Absalom, therefore it is right that for once you should profit from this and not suffer a sudden death. And for this once you shall purchase your life on the following terms, which you must keep as a constant reminder that you owe penance for the treason which you committed against David: go now to your own fields and abide there as a husbandman and enjoy all your possessions, on the condition, however, that you remain a tiller of the soil. But if you ever stretch forth your hand to perform any priestly service or office, the righteous

* Cf. *I Kings*, ii, 28-34.

penalty of the sacred law shall surely come upon your head." * Abiathar went home and did as the king commanded and lived many days; but Shimei died three years later, because he failed to keep what had been commanded, as we have already told.

LXVII

WHY SOLOMON BROKE HIS PROMISE OF PEACE
AND SECURITY TO JOAB

Son. There are still a few points which, it seems to me, I have not examined sufficiently. How did it occur to Solomon to break peace with Joab, seeing that he had fled into God's protection and into the house, the only one in all the world, that was dedicated to God? Churches have now been built in almost every part of the world, and it is considered an evil deed to slay a man who has sought sanctuary. But I have thought that the honor of God's holy house would be the more zealously guarded the fewer such houses were. Another matter which I wish to ask about is this: how did it occur to Solomon to promise what his mother might request and then to break his promise? I should have thought that a wise man like Solomon would have ascertained what the request was likely to be before he gave his promise, and thus avoid recalling his promise, if the request were not to his liking.

Father. I stated in an earlier speech that he who makes a request should be discreet and ask such things only as are proper and may be freely granted; and all

* Cf. *I Kings*, ii, 26-27.

those favors that are wisely asked and granted in like manner ought to remain valid and undisturbed. But Solomon set a good and profitable example in this case, when he wisely withdrew the gift that his mother had indiscreetly requested, though he had already granted it. The following example which is evil and belongs to a much later date was set by Herod: once when he was feasting in Galilee he promised to give his step-daughter whatever she might ask; and on her mother's advice she demanded the head of John the Baptist.* Herod knew that John was an innocent and holy man and deeply regretted that he had made this promise. But his repentance bore no fruit, inasmuch as he was not careful to withdraw the gift wisely which she had requested foolishly; nay more, he did the evil deed that she had suggested. Consequently all were destroyed, the women because of their request and Herod because of his gift. King Solomon, however, thought it better to face his mother's wrathful temper for refusing wisely what he had promised hastily, than to suffer the injury that follows the great crime of allowing foolish and sinful petitions. On the other hand, you should understand clearly that it is never proper for a man to be fickle in promises, and the greater the man, the less fitting it is. But no man is allowed to grant anything that may give rise to crime and sin, even though he has already promised to do so.

* Cf. *Matthew* xiv, 1-12; *Mark*, vi, 16-29.

LXVIII

A DISCUSSION OF PROMISES: WHEN THEY MUST BE KEPT
AND WHEN THEY SHOULD BE WITHDRAWN

Son. Now I wish to ask you to tell me somewhat more clearly how far one should keep what he has pledged and how far he may refuse to carry out what he has promised.

Father. When a lord is asked to grant a favor and the meaning of the request is made clear to him, he ought to ponder carefully what it is that he is asked to do and whether it will bring him injury or honor. If he sees that he can grant it without damage to himself, he ought next to consider the person to whom he is to give what has been asked, and how much may be given in each case, lest he should have an experience like that of Herod, which has already been related. For Herod did not consider fully the merits of the one who made the request, or the occasion, or how much he ought to give. There was this difficulty, too, in Herod's case, that he was drunk when he made the promise; he had made a great banquet for all his lords, and he failed to consider the occasion; for it was not proper for him to make gifts while drunk, since one who is drunk will rarely be moderate in making gifts. He also failed to observe moderation in this, that he gave such an unusual gift to his step-daughter, a woman who was not of his kin, for he spoke in these terms: "Whatsoever you ask I will give you, though you ask half of my kingdom." You will observe from this that he was half-mad from drink when he spoke, for his step-daughter had honored him merely

by beating the drum before him, and her music was entitled to a much smaller reward than the one promised. Nor was it fitting for him to leave the form of the request as well as of the gift to the tongues of others, as he did when he spoke as follows: "Whatsoever you ask you shall have, though you ask half of my kingdom." But if he had spoken in this wise: "Whatever you ask with discretion and in moderation you shall receive, if I can give it," then he would have spoken wisely and well, and it would have remained with him whether to grant or to refuse.

It now remains to point out what sort of gifts a ruler may properly give, when he is asked to do so. Any request may be granted which will bring honor and help to him who asks and will bring no damage to the lord who gives or to any one else. Thus if a lord is asked to give assistance or money, he may well give it, unless his honor should be discredited by the gift; and he may properly give both the labor and the money so long as he gives them to such as are worthy of great honors. But when one is asked to grant a request that would debase or dishonor him, he must refuse it; and even though he should make a promise thoughtlessly, it is to be wisely withdrawn. And if a man bestows a generous gift on one who shows little appreciation of it and is in no wise worthy to have a long and continued possession of an important gift, inasmuch as he does not show proper appreciation, this gift, too, should be withdrawn; for in this case the man's own thoughtlessness and lack of discernment take the gift from him and not the fickleness of him who gave. And if one who desired

a gift has obtained it through falsehood and deceitful pretence, that gift is also to be withdrawn, even though it has been granted; and in this case the man's own fraud and deceit take the gift from him and not the fickleness of him who promised and gave it. But a prince who means to be cautious in making gifts must consider carefully what is requested, and what sort of man has made the request. And since all do not deserve equally great gifts, one must consider how great a gift each one deserves and on what occasion a gift may be given. Then it shall be said but very seldom that he who gave has withdrawn his gift or that he has been found to be fickle-minded.

LXIX

CONCERNING THE KINGSHIP AND THE CHURCH AND
THE KING'S RESPONSIBILITY TO GOD

Son. Now I wish to ask what good reasons there are which would justify King Solomon's act in causing Joab to be slain in God's holy tabernacle while he was clinging to God's sacred altar. Why did he not order him to be brought away first and slain afterwards?

Father. The matter about which you have now inquired cannot be made clear without a lengthy explanation, which will seem more like a comment than a proper continuation of the conversation in which we are now engaged. When Solomon concluded that it was better to slay Joab where he then was than to bring him away, he was not without good grounds for his decision; for he did not wish to fall into such a sin as King Saul fell into when he brought sacrifices to God's

holy altar. Now Solomon did not wish to make this a pretext that he intended to bring gifts or sacrifices to God's holy altar, as if he were carrying out episcopal functions; nor did he wish to take away by force or violence anything that had come so near God's holy altar as Joab then was, inasmuch as he was clinging to the sacred altar. But Solomon pondered the whole matter in his own mind: "It is my duty to carry out the provisions of the sacred law, no matter where the man happens to be whose case is to be determined; but it is not my duty to remove a man by force or violence who has fled to the holy place; for all just decisions are in truth God's decisions and not mine. And I know of a surety that God's holy altar will not be defiled or desecrated by Joab's blood, for it will be shed in righteous punishment and as a penance for him, but not in hatred as in the case of an unjust verdict." In this decision King Solomon illustrated the division of duties that God made between Moses and Aaron; and he did not wish to disturb this arrangement, lest he should fall into disfavor with God. For God had marked out their duties in such a way that Moses was to watch over the rules of the holy law, while Aaron was to care for the sacrifices that might come to the sacred altar.* And you shall know of a truth that this arrangement ought by right to stand even at this day; and you may be able to see this more clearly, if I add a few words in explanation. For the reason is this, that God has established two houses upon earth, each chosen for a definite service. The one is the church; in fact we may give this

* See *Exodus*, xxviii.

name to both, if we like, for the word church means the same as judgment hall, because there the people meet and assemble. These two houses are the halls of God, and He has appointed two men to keep watch over them. In one of these halls He has placed His table, and this is called the house of bread; for there God's people gather to receive spiritual food. But in the other hall He has placed His holy judgment seat; and there the people assemble to hear the interpretation of God's holy verdicts. And God has appointed two keepers to guard these houses: the one is the king, the other the bishop.

Now the king is appointed to keep watch over the sacred house in which the holy seat is placed and to keep the holy verdicts of God. In temporal matters he is to judge between men and in such a way that the reward of eternal salvation may be given to him and to all others who after his day uphold the decisions that have been justly rendered. Into his hands God has also committed the sword of punishment with which to strike when the need arises, just as King Solomon did when he laid Joab under the sword of chastisement, with many others whom he subjected to righteous penalties, as we have already told. The king, then, must always strike, not in hatred but for righteous punishment. But if he slay any one out of hatred, it is murder, and he will have to answer for it as murder before God. You shall also know of a truth that no one is allowed to pluck away any of those things that God from the beginning has assigned to His hall and high-seat; for that would be to rob God Himself and His holy judgment

seat and to disturb arrogantly the arrangement which God has made. And every one who is assigned to this seat should ponder in deep thought what plea he shall have to present when he comes before his own Judge; for every man who comes in his turn before the Highest Judge, having been steward in His hall, may confidently expect Him to employ some mode of address like the following: "Thou bearest Mine own name, for thou art both king and judge as I am; therefore I demand that thou render account for thy stewardship, inasmuch as thou art the appointed judge and leader of My people." Wherefore each one will need to prepare after long reflection and with great care what he is to reply when he comes before the Judge. If the archangel, in whom there is no sign of weakness, gives his answer with fear and trembling, when he is called upon to render account for his services to our Lord and King, one can imagine what fear and trembling will come upon a frail and sinful man, when he is asked to render account for his stewardship in the presence of God. But he who has had this hall in his keeping will first of all be asked how he has dealt out justice among men; and if he is unable to give a satisfactory account, he may expect to hear this sentence: "Thou wicked thrall, since thou hast not observed justice in thy verdicts, thou shalt fare thither where all verdicts are evil; for thine own mouth has assigned thee to this place, inasmuch as it was not ashamed to deliver dishonest judgments." But if he can defend the justice of his decisions with good reasons, he shall find joy in his stewardship and hear these

words: "Inasmuch as thou hast always observed equity as a judge, it is fitting that thou shouldst enjoy a righteous verdict on every count." He will then be asked further on what some of his actions were based; and after that he will have to show how discreetly and carefully he has kept all those things which God in the beginning committed to this judgment seat. But if he has not kept all those things which God in the beginning assigned to the holy seat of judgment, he will be brought face to face with those who have done their duty well, such as Melchisedek or Moses or David or others who have observed these things as faithfully as those named. Then he will hear these words spoken: "If thou hadst been as thoughtful and solicitous as these were in maintaining the honors which I joined in the beginning to My holy judgment seat, thou wouldst have received the same rewards as these enjoy. But now thou shalt be deprived of an honor here as great as the honor which thou didst take without right from My judgment seat; and to that degree shalt thou be regarded less in worth and merit than those who have kept these honors unimpaired which I entrusted to them. When thou wert given charge of My judgment seat, it was not intended that thou shouldst have power to dispose of services, honors, and holy dignities in a manner different from the one that I established in the beginning. For this office was not given thee as an everlasting inheritance, but it was committed to thee for a time only, that thou mightest obtain an eternal reward, if thou didst guard it faithfully. Thou wert given power to distribute worldly

riches, gold and silver, though with discretion, but not to dispose of the honors and glories of My holy judgment seat."

But if it is found that he has been discreet in his charge, he shall have cause to rejoice in his stewardship; he will, however, be examined in various lines. He will be asked how he has used the rod of punishment which was given into his hands; and it is very important that justice shall have been strictly observed in penalties, lest it go so ill with him as with King Saul, who failed to inflict a just penalty which God had commanded him to execute on the people who dwelt in Amalek, but slew unjustly the bishop Ahimelech and all the priests in Nob. But if it should go so ill with him who is thus called to account for penalties inflicted, that he is found to have stumbled in matters like those just mentioned and in which King Saul fell, he will soon hear these words: "Lead him yonder where King Saul and Herod and Nero and others like them abide, and let him dwell there with them, seeing that he wished to be like them in cruelty." Still, if in some cases he has been merciful in sentence and punishment and if there is good reason why he should escape the reproaches that we have just mentioned, those facts will not be forgotten. For then he shall find happiness in all his stewardship and very soon shall hear this greeting: "Thou art welcome, thou faithful servant and good friend, for thou hast loyally kept a slight temporal dignity; now thou shalt come into joyful possession of a great honor, constant and everlasting, wholly free from sorrow and danger." Happy is he who is permitted to hear these words; but wretched

is he who shall hear those words of wrath which we quoted earlier. But no one needs to doubt that everyone who shall be called to account for his office and stewardship will be addressed in one of these two ways.

LXX

THE AUTHORITY OF KINGS AND BISHOPS.

END OF THE SECOND PART

Son. I see clearly that one who is to watch over the rules of the sacred law and deal out justice in all cases is surely assigned a very difficult task. It is also evident that King Solomon could not be called to account for having Joab slain in God's tabernacle, inasmuch as he slew him for a just punishment, not out of enmity or in hatred, as Cain slew his brother Abel. God's tabernacle was not defiled by Joab's blood, seeing that it was not shed in hatred; but the earth was defiled by Abel's blood, because it was shed in hatred. And I understand fully that the sin and the desecration are caused by the hatred and not by the punishment. But now you have spoken of two halls which God has dedicated to His service upon earth, and there are certain things that concern these about which I wish to inquire. You have stated that in one of them God has placed His judgment seat; you have discussed that and also the office of him who is in charge of it. You have also said that in the other hall is God's table, from which all God's people shall take spiritual food; and you added that the bishop has been appointed keeper of this hall. Now I wish to ask you why King Solomon removed Abiathar the

bishop from the office that had been assigned to him, namely that of keeper of the hall to which I have just referred, and removed him so completely that he was never afterwards allowed to put forth his hand to the episcopal office, but was to live from that time on as a churl or a plowboy. But I have thought that neither of these two keepers can have authority to remove the other from the office which has been committed to him. Therefore I should like to have you point out a few considerations which will make clear how King Solomon could remove the bishop Abiathar from his office without incurring reproof from God.

Father. I called your attention to these facts to remind you that both these halls are God's houses and both king and bishop the servants of God and keepers of these houses; but they do not own them in the sense that they can take anything away from them that was assigned to them in the beginning. Therefore the king must not pluck anything away from the house which the bishop has in his keeping, for neither should rob the other. And there should be no plundering of one by the other, but each ought to support the other for the same One owns both houses, namely God. I have also told you that God has given the rod of punishment into the hands of both the king and the bishop. The rod of punishment that has been committed to the king is a two-edged sword: with this sword it is his duty to smite to the death everyone who tries to take anything away from the sacred hall of which he is the guardian. But the king's sword is two-edged for the reason that it is also his duty to guard the house which is in the bishop's

keeping, if the bishop is unable to defend it with his own rod of punishment. The bishop shall have his rod of punishment in his mouth, and he shall smite with words but not with hands like the king. And the bishop shall strike his blow in the following manner: if any one attempt to dishonor the sacred hall that is in his care, he shall refuse him the table which is placed in this holy house and the holy sustenance which is taken from this table. But when King Solomon deprived Abiathar the bishop of the episcopal office and dignity, he said that Abiathar's own guilt deprived him and not he. Since he had decreed that David should forfeit his throne before God had ordered it, and had chosen another king to replace David, while he was still living, it was right to deprive him of the episcopal office, seeing that he wanted to rob David of the royal office. Saul's guilt, on the other hand, when he had slain the bishop Ahimelech and all the priests in the city of Nob, was a grievous burden, because he had done this without just cause. But even if King Solomon should have killed the bishop Abiathar, he would have been without guilt; for the bishop had deprived the house of God of the lord whom God Himself had appointed keeper of the holy judgment seat. The bishop Abiathar had no right either to appoint or to remove any one, as was later made evident; for David chose the one whom he wished to be king in his stead, and the choice which Abiathar had made was of no effect. Abiathar the bishop obtained the episcopal office through the will of David who appointed him to it. Now you are to understand that there is this difference between the business of a king and the duties of a

bishop: the bishop is appointed to be the king's teacher, counsellor, and guide, while the king is appointed to be a judge and a man of severity in matters of punishment, to the great terror of all who are subject to him. Nevertheless, the bishop wields a rod of punishment as well as the king. There is this difference, however, between the king's sword and that of the bishop, that the king's sword always bites when one strikes with it, and bites to great injury when it is used without right, while it serves him well whom it may strike when it is rightfully used. But the bishop's sword bites only when it is used rightfully; when it is wrongfully used, it injures him who smites with it, not him who is stricken. When the bishop strikes rightfully, however, his sword wounds even more deeply than the king's. But this subject we shall discuss more fully at some other time, if it is thought advisable.

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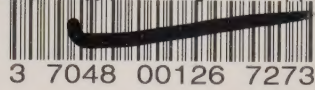
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